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The Border Bandit's Indian Brother

by Max Brand

Author of "The Border Bandit," etc.

CHAPTER I.

WAR MEDICINE.

ALL through the night Yellow Wolf had traveled so long as the moon shone; but, when it passed behind thick clouds, he paused and made camp in a stubby group of willows. For one does not travel in the dark night, particularly when on the warpath, seeing that the weather in which one leaves this world is the weather which one will find far off on the shore of the happy hunting grounds. That other land is apt to be dull and misty enough, wherefore there is all the more reason that one should wish to take with one a good, bright, burning sun. One wishes to join the battle under the broad, white noonday; and then, if one's spirit departs, it journeys in a breath to the eternal hunting grounds and there enjoys fair weather unceasingly. Who, therefore, will care to risk death by night when no moon shows, and then, through eternity, stumble and grope through the dark fields of heaven with never enough light to see the shadowy buffalo that browse those phantom pastures?

Yellow Wolf, like a good Comanche, knew all of these things. He had sat at the knees of the elders of the tribe through the long winter evenings. And even on the warpath, as a boy, he had

been willing to subdue himself and listen, and learn. Would you have a proof that he had not listened in vain?

Behold him, then, as he starts for his journey in the pink of the morning. He strips off his clothes. He steps to the verge of the standing water; and his image lies before him and turns its head as he turns his, staring toward the far-off mountain, now turning from black to blue in the dawn light. He dives in, swims with swift, effortless strokes beneath the surface until he is half across the pool, and then turns, and floats on his back until he touches the shore again. And this is water which, not very long before, was ice and snow!

Standing once more on the shore, he whips the water from his body with the edges of his hands. Then he puts on the breechclout. He steps into mocassins beautifully beaded; the work of a squaw's entire winter, perhaps, has gone to the decoration of those mocassins. He steps into tight-fitted deerskin trousers; and you must notice, now, the fringe that goes down the outer seam, fluttering in the breeze like hair. It is hair, human hair, at that. And, to make it really important, it was hair taken from the bodies of dead victims, slain by the hand of Mr. Yellow Wolf, himself.

He goes to his hobbled horse. It is a beautiful little pied animal with great prominent eyes, and those eyes fill with terror as it sees its master approach; for you may be sure that Yellow Wolf is not a gentle rider. To him the four legs of a pony serve in lieu of wings, and he scorns to fly across the earth less swiftly than the buzzard which sails on effortless pinions through the blue-white sky above.

Upon the back of the dainty piebald, Yellow Wolf throws a clumsy Indian saddle, with a harsh wooden frame, made to torture the horse without giving great comfort to the man. But the iron body of Yellow Wolf scorns petty comforts and rejoices in a little pain as much as any holy anchorite that ever laid the scourge on his own back for the sake of having the wounds of his soul healed in heaven. The horse is saddled. The rawhide thong which ordinarily trails from the neck of the mustang is coiled over the pommel of the saddle.

Then Yellow Wolf looks to his adornment. Before he stepped into the pool, he had removed some eagle feathers from his hair. Now he restores them to the proper place. Those feathers are a little timeworn; but they are honorable, you may be sure, because Yellow Wolf himself caught the bird who raised them. He caught that eagle when he himself was only a little boy, and he saved the feathers until he should become a warrior and of a reputation which allowed the wearing of such adornments. The first time a foe felt the full blade of his knife as he counted coup, Yellow Wolf took those feathers and dipped the tips of them in the heart's blood of the fallen enemy. That is why the broad ends of those feathers are so discolored, but Yellow Wolf regards them with infinite satisfaction.

His hair is now dressed and he turns to other matters. First, he draws from its case of antelope hide, running down the right side of the saddle, beneath his leg, a long, ponderous Kentucky rifle, such as, at one time, had been sure death in the hands of the frontiersmen who were raised to its use. But Yellow Wolf has never been able to afford enough powder and shot to enable him to practice with the weapon and become expert with it. Now and then he fires it. And he would not dream of coming out on the warpath without it because he regards with a sort of superstitious reverence this weapon of the white man. It is great medicine. And, being in his posses-

sion, it is his medicine. It is almost like a household god, to Yellow Wolf. He sees that it is well. At least outwardly it seems as handsome, as ever. For every day he rubs and caresses it, and admires the shimmering beauty of its octagonal barrel.

Now he restores it to its handsome, beaded case. And he turns to the more effective part of his equipment. His knife he need only draw from the sheath and instantly restore it to its place. Because he always knows exactly the condition of that knife. It is as much a part of him as his hand. He is aware by instinct if the steel be tarnished or the edge blunted or nicked. Every day, and two or three times a day, it is almost subconsciously polished and whetted, often on the horny bottom of his naked foot, or finished on the palm of his strong hand. The knife, then, is always in order; but the bow and arrows are another matter. Arrows, for instance, are continually altering. The wood itself, unless it has been most carefully seasoned, is very apt to warp a little. And that will spoil the arrow for all except the most hand-to-hand fighting. And the continual chafing to which they are subjected during the jostling of each day's ride is apt to injure the feathers which must keep the arrow true in its flight, as a rudder steers a ship. He examines these arrows, one by one. Some are shorter and thicker of shaft and headed with a very small point. Those are the hunting arrows. The buffalo arrows, you may call them, since ten are used on that game for one used on any other. Other arrows have longer, slenderer shafts, with heavier heads. Those heads are not simple, like the hunting arrows; but they are curiously and cruelly barbed, so that, once having entered the flesh, they cannot be drawn out but must be cut away with the greatest of care.

Now Yellow Wolf sighs as he looks at those arrows, the pride of his heart. And straightway he sits down on his heels and replaces one of the rudder feathers on a war arrow. And he takes out another war arrow and scowls as he observes it; and his throat swells thick as he thinks of the words which he will address to Three Crows, the arrow maker, on his return to the Comanche village. Fool of a chattering magpie! He must be blind, not to tell green wood from old! Look, therefore, at this arrow, which might be the last in the sheaf, and upon its truth the life of the warrior might depend! However, the rest of Yellow Wolf's stock suited him well enough. Considering the journey, their condition was all that could very well be expected.

He looked at the rest of his accouterments. The big oval shield, made of the strongest back skin of a buffalo bull, and sun-hardened until it was almost as light as wood and as tough as steel—the big shield does not need much attention; but he looks it over with care. Yonder is the rent made when the war ax of an Apache hero clove even through the stout fabric of this shield. That strong-fingered squaw, Little Minnow, had sewed up the rent with strings of gut. And here toward the top of the shield were two small holes drilled through and through. Bullet holes, those, received while swinging in a flying charge around the covered wagon of a traveler across the plains. They served Yellow Wolf, now, for peepholes, often of use in the midst of a hard and close hand-to-hand battle.

That shield was blanched and white over all of its surface, except for the yellow figure of a buffalo wolf which was inscribed in the exact center. So skillfully was it painted that even a child could guess what it was. And, for this work of art, Yellow Wolf had paid no less than six buffalo robes, all well

cured, and all softened and suppled. He took his name from that fine figure on his shield.

The shield examined, he gave a look to his lance, fourteen feet long, or perhaps a trifle more, long-headed, slender of haft, with a balance which he knew so well that its weight and its awkward length never confused him. Last of all, and most important of all, he gripped his bow with an affectionate might. It was four feet long, made of the best selected wood, and proved in the hands of Yellow Wolf time and again. All his arms, then, were in good order, and he had spent a full fifteen or twenty minutes handling them, after the old maxim which was always going the rounds in his tribe:

"When the enemy is seen, it is too late to begin to ask questions of the war bow!"

So Yellow Wolf asked his questions, always, well beforehand.

Now the arms were looked to, and there remained only one thing to take his attention, and that was a little skin of a field shrew, which hung from around his neck, suspended by a narrow lariat of horse hair. That was the medicine bag of Yellow Wolf, no less important to him and to his soul than his scalp and warlock.

He took the little medicine bag in both his hands and raised his face to the sky and stood for a moment in silent contemplation of the blueness of the heavens, and the sweep of the rosy clouds across it. Prayer passed from the soul of Yellow Wolf and blew away toward the heart of heaven. Then he stooped, picked up a handful of the ashes from his dead fire of the night before, and threw them into the air. The wind blew them swift and far, straight down the valley before him. Yellow Wolf took this as an excellent omen, and he hastened to spring into the saddle and start on his journey once more.

CHAPTER II.

THE COYOTE.

HE came to a triple forking of the valley, with a stream running brown and white through the heart of each. This was not as it had been in the map which had been drawn on the ground for him by White Hawk.

He dismounted; and, sitting on his heels, he sketched again upon the ground the whole set of instructions which he had received from his chief. Yonder stood the tall mountain; and here was the deep valley; and, as for the two smaller ravines, perhaps they had been considered too small to be worth notice. As for the streams which ran through them, when White Hawk was in this region there had been only one stream, instead of three; perhaps because it was not the season of melting snows.

Having assured himself upon this important point, he took his way again down the deeper of the valleys. But now he proceeded with the greatest caution, and every time he came to a sharp-headed hill, he dismounted and crawled snakelike to the top of it. There he would lie, scanning every feature of the valley before him with the attention and the intelligence with which a white man might scan a printed page.

He had come to the sixth or the seventh of these hills in this slow progress before he saw what he expected, and this was a little log cabin set down in the center of a broad-bottomed hollow, through which the river ran; and the noise of its talking rose sleepily and brimmed the valley from wall to wall.

It was a pleasant place. Here and there were ample growths of trees; though they never extended in a dense forest, but left the ground open and free to the cattle which dotted the valley with little dim bits of color. Now and again the sound of lowing rose in

mellow notes above the chanting of the river. But all of these sounds were so faint and so far that when a blackbird whistled near by, it drowned all else.

Yellow Wolf, lying out flat and leaning on his elbows, scanned every detail with the utmost attention, as one whose eyes were seeing for more than his own single uses. He wrote all down on his memory. He would be prepared to speak of the minutest particles of all of this picture. He could say where the trees stood, and how far the log cabin was from the edge of the running water, and where it was that long strips of the soil had been turned up by the edge of the plow and now lay black beneath the sky—a blot upon the landscape, in the estimation of Yellow Wolf. He had heard the elders of his tribe say that wherever the white man came to graze cattle, there the Indians might still live, also; but that where the white man came to turn over the ground like a stupid mole, there the Indian must fight for his existence.

Just why this should be, Yellow Wolf did not know; and he did not ask. He did not pretend to be a philosopher. It was enough that the older heads should do the thinking, while he would content himself by doing whatever fighting came in his way. Scalps and buffalo robes were enough to fill the widest horizon of his imagination. He had no desire to grow into a medicine man.

However, since that item of the plowed land would be of importance, he considered its extent, also, and thought that it was only a tiny spot on the face of this fine valley. He admired, too, the solidity with which the log cabin had been erected. And he noted the stacks of hay, weather-blackened at the tops, and the outsheds, and the tangle of fencing which served to split the land into convenient portions of corral and pasture near the little house.

The wind had changed, now, and blowing up the valley it carried to his nostrils the scent of the wood smoke which floated from the chimney above the roof of the cabin. It carried to the nostrils of Yellow Wolf the fragrance of cooking food, far other than foods which he had known in his life. The smell of these delectable oddities made his nostrils quiver and widen and brought a sense of emptiness into his very soul.

However, he quelled those emotions, and began to take note that he was not the only interested watcher of that cabin. There was another not a hundred yards down the valley, crouched behind a rock—a spirit as secret and as fierce and well-nigh as subtle as his own—a little coyote with pricked ears studying the chances of gaining a meal for himself from all the tantalizing odors which tangled so joyfully in the air that blew from the house of the white man. Yellow Wolf, amused by the attention of the coyote, felt the minutes slipping by less slowly, while he waited in case chance might bring the white man out to his view.

Clouds gathered suddenly across the face of the sun. The wind turned sharp and rattled down a shower of rain that stung the tender skin between the shoulder blades of Yellow Wolf, but he did not stir limb or eye from the picture before him. White Hawk would have been proud of the steady nerve of his pupil. It was not a vain sign—the trimming of scalp locks which quivered down the outer seams of his trousers, or the two locks which dangled from the head of his spear. Yellow Wolf had killed before, and he was worthy to kill again. If only kind fortune would bring a white man's scalp to join the Apache prizes which he already carried!

The shower ended. The cloud scattered and ran for the edges of the sky like mischievous boys who have been

throwing stones. The sun burned down with a kindly heat against the earth, once more. And at last the owner of the shack came forth. Yellow Wolf had been prepared for a great spectacle. White Hawk had given him a description in some detail. But still, he was shocked and moved with wonder.

Yellow Wolf was himself a big fellow; and, if his legs had not been bowed a little, after the true Comanche type, he would have stood a shade over six feet, with ample bulk to back him. But he knew that if he were at the side of this white man, he would be overshadowed—not only by mere width of shoulders and by sheer inches in height but also by a certain air of magnificence and bigness which flowed forth from the stranger. One did not need to ask if he were as strong as his bulk promised. One needed only to see the wave of his hand to know that his arm was robed with immense might. One needed only to see him walk in order to make sure that he could run like an antelope.

But what stirred the heart of the Indian more than all else, perhaps, was the tide of golden-red hair which flowed down in frontier fashion almost to the shoulders of the white man. Never in all his days had Yellow Wolf seen such a scalp, and his eyes went bright and small with concentrated desire. He would give ten years, twenty years from his life, for the sake of enjoying the possession of that scalp. He could see it now, in fancy, glistening like a golden fleece from the central pole of his tepee, shining in the firelight, while the faces of the men were lifted toward it in awe and admiration. He drew a great breath, and reached for the Kentucky rifle, but still he hesitated. He knew his limitations with that gun, and this was long distance.

At about the same time, the coyote decided that it would be safe to change his position. So he slid from his sheltering rock and stole down the hillside, with Yelow Wolf watching through the grass which he parted before him with his hand. He had often watched coyotes before, and never had he observed them without learning lessons of the greatest value upon the warpath, whether stalking for information or for scalps. Now he admired the perfect manner in which the little scoundrel glided from rock to rock and from bush to bush, sometimes, it seemed, walking straight into the eye of the big man with the flaming hair, but always unobserved.

The giant had led forth a span of mules, of such a size and build that the heart of the Comanche leaped in him again, for mules were infinitely prized among his tribesmen. There was nothing like a mule, indeed, for the weary miles of desert travel, when the chosen warriors rode south on the Mexican trail.

Now this white man, this white squaw, was harnessing the mules to a plow and preparing to labor again—a disgusting spectacle. More disgusting, indeed, because White Hawk had assured him in no measured terms that this man of the golden head was a warrior of tremendous fame and prowess! However, to see was to believe; and Yellow Wolf denied, in his heart of hearts, that a man could be both a hero and an earthworm, as this settler seemed to be.

The coyote, it seemed, took somewhat the same view of the case; for now it ventured to leave all cover for a matter of ten yards or so, and it leaped away across a narrow clearing toward the brush behind one of the sheds. After all, it was not taking a real risk. It was not taking more of a chance, say, than the man who lifts his head for a single instant above the stockade, to shoot an arrow at the encircling enemy. So decided Yellow Wolf, as he watched.

And he was very keenly alert, so that not a bit of the miracle that followed escaped him. What he saw was that the man of the red-gold hair turned the slightest bit to the side and then a gun winked in his hand at the hip, though the movement of that hand to draw the weapon was much faster than the eye of even Yellow Wolf could follow.

The same instant, the gun spoke—from the hip of the man, and not raised, and aimed! It exploded, with such a sure aim that it flicked up dust and gravel before the face of the speeding coyote. That cunning brute whirled about and darted for the covert from which it had just issued. The curling of a cracked whiplash could hardly have been faster. And yet, even as it spun around, fate overtook it. The gun spat again from the hand of the big man. The coyote leaped into the air with a screech, and falling, toppled over and over half a dozen times down the steep slope of the hill.

CHAPTER III.

THE SMOKE SIGNAL.

THE Indian closed his eyes, and he kept them closed for a long moment. He was telling himself that the glint of the metal at the hip of the gold-head had not been the flash of a pistol, at all; for who had heard of a gun which could speak twice as rapidly as one could snap one's fingers—or even a little faster? A coyote thinks a little bit more quickly than the whirring spokes of a carriage wheel revolve. And as fast as it could think that little wolf-dog had stopped and whirled. And yet it had been struck dead.

Yellow Wolf did not want to think that there was magic in this. But, as he lay there in the grass with his eyes closed, he prayed to the Great Spirit that this might not be a fleshly man to whom had been confided the awful power of wielding the naked lightning flash. He opened his eyes and looked again.

No, there was gold-head very plainly holding in his hand a species of pistol, stockier and rather shorter than the ones which Yellow Wolf had seen before. All the elements of magic, you will say, were instantly removed. No, not at all! For you must not forget that in the case on his saddle, Yellow Wolf carried a rifle with which he only occasionally could strike the mark, and yet he was possessed with awe for the weapon. How much more so for those mysterious rifles of the trappers and the frontiersmen with which he had seen them perform uncanny feats! And then, how vastly more mystery was attached to this little pistol which spoke twice as fast as the rapid tongue of a chattering girl, and which killed with every syllable it uttered. It was magic, of course; for was it not apparent that the weapon had not been raised to the shoulder and sighted? It had merely been bared in the hand of the giant, and therefore it had worked its own mischief.

No, it was of course magic, but with a difference. For, in the first place, there had come to Yellow Wolf the dreadful suspicion that he was looking upon one of the chosen of the spirits; but now it was merely certain that this was a wise and fortunate man who had made the very biggest medicine that Yellow Wolf had ever heard of and had ever seen. To a certain extent, he could call himself blessed in that he had seen such a marvel. Only to recite it would make him a marked man, and Indians would ride many miles to sit in his tepee. And the wise men of the Comanches would become silent and raise their faces when they heard him tell this story.

For that purpose, he regarded the spot with keenest eyes, now. He estimated with a shrewd glance that the

firing had been done at a distance of from twenty-five to thirty paces. He made sure that the white man's side had been turned and therefore that he had fired the bullets across his body, which made the impossibility of aiming doubly great. He would testify, also, that the mules, instead of bolting away as this miracle was performed under their eyes, had merely cocked their long ears forward and stood attentively watching, as though they, also, had fallen under the spell of this man's wizardry.

He observed, also, that as the big man now fell to work to skin his victim, his knife appeared to lack the cunning which lay, for instance, in the keen blade at the belt of Yellow Wolf. Only, with a prodigious force and comparatively few knife strokes, gold-head seemed to draw the coyote from its hot pelt by sheer might of hand. The very inmost bones of Yellow Wolf ached as he saw this feat performed, for he knew all the secrets of how the pelt is neatly and snugly fitted to the body of a beast.

Then he saw the giant turn to the mules. Perhaps there were other and smaller miracles of big medicine to be attested, now, in the fact that he did not curse the mules as he drove them forth. No whip or blacksnake was curling and snapping in his hands. Neither did he roar at them; but with a word so quiet that it almost stopped in the thin air before drifting to the ears of Yellow Wolf, he sent the obedient team on its way. Through the gate they passed, through the lowered bars of the adjoining field; and now they were turning the mellow soil with the plow and adding new, shining, black furrows beside the whitening ones which already lay there.

Having seen these things, Yellow Wolf waited to see no more. He had ridden along this trail with the fixed determination of striving to exceed his orders, which were simply to learn if gold-head were here and to send back instant word through the air. He had determined, if possible, to see the man and take his scalp, and come back to White Hawk with the trophy to make himself admired among his nation. But now he changed his mind completely. For it was plain that one who held in the hollow of his hand such medicine as this was not for the single attack of any one Comanche; rather, he was for the united assault of half a hundred of the best warriors.

So Yellow Wolf stole back from the hilltop which had screened him; and he reached his pony; and he rode hastily back up the valley, taking care to keep to such rocky and graveled places as would least plainly show the print of the pony's unshod feet.

He went up the valley a dozen miles to a tall eminence. There he collected the materials to make a fire. He struck a shower of sparks from flint and steel into tinder, raised a smoke, and then a fire; and, when the blaze was working satisfactorily, he heaped over the blaze a quantity of tender green trimmings from the boughs. This cast into the air a column of smoke as dense as a sculptor's marble and glistening in its whiteness as it rose. Over this column he cast his blanket, held it down for an instant, and snatched it back, releasing a big, fat, curling puff that sailed like a vast bubble into the sea of the air. He did the same again and again, and then annihilated the fire, stamping out the embers.

From the beginning to the end, the total time this smoke signal had lasted had not been more than two minutes. He could be sure that White Hawk would have watchers staring at that point upon the horizon. And, unless suspicious white men were scanning the sky with care, they would not have been able to detect any signal at all, except for that brief interval.

Having done this, he journeyed down into the wide valley beyond, where he had seen buffalo straying in a little group. For it was part of his duty, as a perfect scout, to have provisions in readiness, if possible, when the rest of his clansmen arrived upon the warpath.

He skirted down through the rolling hills, taking the greatest care in his approach, since this was only a small, detached company, flung out from the great central masses of the plains cattle. Since the group was small they were certain to be doubly wary and fleet of foot. Good luck favored him. A grove of young trees acted as a screen for his approach; and, lingering for an instant behind the outermost trees, he surveyed the band with burning eyes and picked his quarry—a strapping young male, whose meat was sure to be tender and whose bulk would supply a plentiful body of viands for the coming Comanches.

Then he drove the sharpened butt of the lance into the ground. With a thong that hung from the edge of his heavy shield, he fastened it to the upright shaft of the spear, and thus disencumbered, he drew forth his bow and prepared four good arrows, chosen from the lot.

After that, he gathered the pony beneath him, by working his heel cunningly and cruelly into its tender flank; and, when it was quivering with fear and pain, he released it, and burst into the open with a wild yell. That inhuman screech seemed to paralyze the buffalo for a moment. With their shaggy heads raised and their tails sticking straight out in fear, they remained as stunned until they were sure of the danger rushing at them. Then down went heads, up went tails; and they were instantly at full speed across the level.

The pinto was a sprinter. Now he whisked past a slow-moving cow at the rear of the herd; now he passed a heavy bull, which threw its head and gave him a glance from red eyes. Now he was closing on the chosen quarry. The buffalo, feeling doom upon it, dodged like a cat. The brave followed on a pony not less quick-footed, and Yellow Wolf was beside his victim.

He drew his bow to the ear and sent the shaft into the body; and, with such vast force was the arrow driven, that it passed clear through and issued upon the farther side. The buffalo still ran a few strides, but the mischief was done. Presently it halted and stood with drooping head. Its hind legs sank to the ground, but still it braced itself resolutely upon its forelegs and shook its head threateningly at the man as he approached.

Yellow Wolf simply laughed. He seized one of the immature horns with a hand of iron. With the hunting knife in his other hand he opened the throat of his prey with a great, deep gash, to bleed the meat whiter. And then, standing by the dying body, he worked his heel upon its ribs to force the life faster away. There was no compassion in Yellow Wolf. But how could you expect such an emotion in him? He himself would not have known how to admire it. He would have regarded it as madness.

But, even as he worked at cutting up the body, he now and then cast a furtive glance over his shoulder as though he dreaded lest a monster with flying golden hair might appear over the edge of the hill and rush down upon him.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE TOWER ROOM.

THE mules, turning at the end of a furrow, had moved slowly about; and the plow, swung deftly about by Oliver Tay, was beginning to flesh its blade in the turf once more, when he looked up and before him saw

above Mount Loomis a little, round white cloud moving up past the trees. It was just like a thousand other clouds which spotted the sky on this day, except that it was a little whiter, if anything, and a little denser and more crystal shining.

It changed, faded, melted, and was gone with a surprising suddenness. The mules came to the end of the furrow, and Oliver did not turn them. He was staring with a frown at the spot where that tiny cloud had disappeared. There was something wrong about it. What could it be? And then suddenly his mind cleared, and he knew. It was no cloud, for clouds are not breathed up in round puffs from the earth and past the trees. It was smoke, and what could have thrown smoke into such a neat bubble except the signaling blanket of a wild Indian, or a still wilder white man?

A moment later, the mules were turned loose in the pasture; and Oliver Tay was hurrying up the valley on a horse. He aimed straight at the shoulder of Mount Loomis; and so it happened that when he came over that ridge, his glasses ready, he was able to look down into the pleasant hollow beneath. There he perceived Yellow Wolf at the work of cutting up the dead buffalo. He looked more carefully, taking the Indian in the full focus of his glass; and then he was sure that it was a Comanche—and that meant trouble, particularly since it was a Comanche accoutered for the warpath. He turned the glass here and there and discovered a little scattering of buffalo in the distance, but certainly they were not in sufficient numbers to be worth sending the news of them on to a main body of these Indians. That floating bubble of white which had dissolved into the sky was a signal, and it was a signal of what?

Oliver Tay made up his mind quickly enough. There was danger being called his way, and what had he to meet the advance of a body of these marauders except his own single hand?

He turned his horse back, and headed in a bird's-flight line across country and toward Siddon Flat.

For Antonio Morales always said: "Whenever in doubt about Indians, call in your neighbors!" And Antonio Morales knew all about Indians. In fact, he was almost an Indian himself. Ah, to have the help of Antonio, now, together with great Carpio Vega, perhaps, and that little, wicked snake of a man, Capiño! However, they were doubtless far, far south, working their evil, careless, joyous ways under the direction of Roderigo Venales. And this problem of Oliver Tay must be met by him alone.

His horse was dripping with foam as it made into Siddon Flat. He had come in, purposely, past the place of Samson Barge; and he had a glimpse of Marian in the garden. He reined in his horse and leaned across the garden fence to kiss her.

"I'll be back at once," said Oliver Tay.

"What has happened?" she asked him. "You haven't struck gold?"

"You're an optimist," said Oliver. "I'll see you again in half an hour." And he rode briskly on down the street, and through the town and toward the fort.

The fort of Siddon Flat was constructed in the simplest possible manner. The commandant's house was in the center. There was a parade space around it. Then came the barracks. And beyond the barracks another space which could be filled with the tents of traders, if need be, or turned over to the civilian population in case the Indians came down in a flood and swept them out of the town. And around all there was a tall stockade, loopholed, with a four-foot bank of dirt and stones on the inside, and a deep ditch on the outside.

It was not a great matter as a fort, and a single five-pound gun could have pounded it to pieces in no time at all. But against rifle fire it could hold out indefinitely, and therefore it was safe from the Indians so long as it could be effectively manned.

It had little watch towers built at the corners of the parapets; and, since this was a time of peace, the commandant, Lieutenant-colonel Randolf Chisholm, was using the largest of these towers as an office. For, with the casements opened on all four sides, he was given more cool air and more view than from any other place in the fort.

On this day, Colonel Chisholm was in conversation with Peter Sydham, that gentleman-trader, when the orderly brought in word that a farmer had just come in reporting danger from Comanches. Peter Sydham's brows rose, but Colonel Chisholm merely shrugged his shoulders.

"I've only been at this post three weeks," said he; "but in that time I've had a hundred alarms. They're Indian mad, the people out this way, Mr. Sydham."

Mr. Sydham agreed that they were. Still, he felt that the Comanches were enough to make almost any one nervous.

"Stuff!" said the colonel. "Ten trained men could slaughter a hundred wild Indians any day!" He turned to the orderly. "Have Captain Alston question this farmer," he said.

The orderly saluted, but with a shadow in his eyes that made the colonel ask, "What's his name?"

"Oliver Tay," said the orderly. And he added with a glint of meaning, "It's *the* Oliver Tay."

"The Oliver Tay?" said the colonel. "Have you ever heard of such a fellow, Sydham?"

"He's my cousin and my stepson," sighed the trader, looking down to the floor.

"Is that so? Why, I'll have him in, then—if you'll only explain why it is that a gentleman would take up farming in this part of the world!"

Mr. Sydham sighed again, in such a manner that the colonel stared at him. "As a matter of fact," said Peter Sydham, "I have to be honest with you. Oliver and I are not on the best of terms."

The colonel waited, and Peter Sydham continued, "As a matter of fact, Colonel Chisholm, my poor Oliver is a lad who was raised in the best possible manner and according to the very best models. But all this would not do. There was a wild strain—well, I shall only say that his best friends are a rough lot of Mexicans, cutthroats, and what not; and now the poor misguided fellow has settled down, ostensibly to farm; though goodness knows what his real business may be."

The colonel smiled sternly. "A little farming on the side," he suggested, "and a good deal of lawless work as a real occupation. Is that your meaning, Sydham? I understand you, and I thank you for dealing so frankly with me. I'll soon send him about his business."

He sent for another orderly and dispatched a command that Mr. Tay should be brought directly to his own presence. Peter Sydham discreetly withdrew to the adjoining room, very well pleased with himself; for ever since a certain day on which he had found that he was unable to face the scorn and the derision and the contempt in the eyes of Oliver Tay, he had been constantly waiting for an opportunity of doing the young man a harm. Now it seemed that the occasion had come.

So he tilted his chair back beside the window, and lighted a cigar, and hoped with all his heart that Oliver would recognize the scent of that brand of tobacco and guess that his stepfather

was behind the reception which he was about to be accorded, as the fumes of that cigar floated into the room where the colonel was sitting.

A long swinging stride, a quiver of the floor that extended even into the adjoining chamber where Mr. Sydham waited; and Sydham knew that Oliver Tay was before the colonel. Colonel Chisholm allowed the big man to stand for a moment, while he eyed him. Courtesy was not one of the studies of the colonel, when he had to do with civilians. Inside the army, no one could be a stricter observer of the niceties of life than the colonel. But outside of the wearers of the uniform, the colonel evidently felt that every one was a private —and not a private in good standing, at that. He allowed no one to have a share of his consideration unless it were an occasional trader, like Peter Sydham, who carried a brand of whisky of a necessary excellence.

"You think that you have bad news about Indians," said the colonel. "Now let me have your proofs." It was a very crisp and terse way of going at the thing. Mr. Sydham, in the adjoining room, waited for an explosion from Oliver Tay. But there was no explosion.

Oliver was merely saying, gently: "It's very well known that the big war chief of the Comanches—I mean White Hawk—has had it in for me for a long time and——"

"I'm not talking about ancient history," snapped the colonel. "I want the evidence that brought you hot-footing it into the fort and spreading an Indian alarm."

Very stern talk, colonel! Even Peter Sydham winced a little.

"Very well," said Mr. Tay. "The facts are that I saw a smoke signal up the valley from my house. I rode up to the place on Mount Loomis, and looking down into the hollow, I was able to see a young Comanche warrior rigged up for the warpath. He was cutting up a buffalo which he had killed. And I believe he was signaling to a band of his mates to come to his help so that they could loot the valley of everything that I have in it."

"Is that all?" asked the colonel.

"That's all."

"And the evidence of the 'raid' is confined to what you have just told me?"

"Exactly."

The colonel allowed an impressive pause to intervene; and then he murmured, "Interesting! I like to see a vigorous imagination at work."

CHAPTER V.

THE CHALLENGE.

IN the next room Cousin Peter Sydham had grown so excited that a veritable cloud of smoke rolled from his cigar and now pressed through the doorway and into the colonel's room. And still there was no outburst from Oliver Tay. He was explaining calmly:

"You see, Colonel Chisholm, it may seem a sketchy thing to you, but I know that White Hawk most powerfully wants my scalp and that he's been waiting for a chance to get at me for a long time."

"And what has kept him away this long?" asked the colonel coldly.

"The fact that I usually have some friends with me—a set of fellows who are poison to the Indians; and White Hawk has never wanted to spend as many braves as he would have to in order to wipe us out. But now I am alone, and word of it must have been brought to him. Otherwise I wouldn't have seen that scout to-day."

The colonel raised his hand. "Now, young man, will you listen to me?"

"Gladly."

"The reason that White Hawk has not touched you or any other person near Siddon Flat for a long time, is

because of the troops under my command. And you may take it for granted that your group of 'friends,' whoever they may be, have nothing to do with his inaction. I know Indians. And I know what I'm talking about."

"I didn't know," said Oliver Tay, even more gently than before, "that you were an old Indian fighter."

"I have studied the situation thoroughly before being sent to this command," said the young colonel.

"Do you mean that you know the Indians out of books?"

"Yes," said the colonel.

"I thought so," said Oliver Tay. "So you know that I shall be safe?"

"Exactly! Now return and let me hear no more about this foolish matter. One swallow doesn't make a summer, and one Indian doesn't make a massacre; though to hear some of you Westerners talk, by Heaven! one would think that that was the case."

"I should like to point out a few things," said Oliver Tay. "The first is that I have taken every penny that belongs to me in the world and that I have invested it in my little ranch. I have bought up the best sort of cattle and stocked the grazing sections of it. I have bought horses and mules of the first quality. I've built a house and furnished it with all essentials. And I've bought tools for cultivation of the farm lands."

"I don't see," said the colonel, "what this has to do with the case, so far as I'm concerned!"

"I shall show you immediately," said Mr. Tay. "You are here to protect the lives and the property of the citizens of our country. Now, sir, my property is not something to be scoffed at. It's worth the protection which it would receive by the presence of a troop of cavalry for a few days. I'll pay for their food, and I'll give them shelter and lodging while they're with me. And I'll guarantee, besides, to show them more sign of Comanches than they've seen in a good many days."

"I think that the matter is closed," said the colonel stiffly.

"Wait one moment," said Oliver Tay. "You have to remember that I have listed quite a number of things on my farm."

"Quite a number," said the colonel. "I shall have to ask you to leave me now, Mr. Tay. My time is not my own!"

The floor shook. Could it have been that Oliver Tay had stamped his ponderous foot? And now his voice rose and swelled to an ominous strength. "Colonel, I'm leaving the door open to you to protect me and my possessions. And if those possessions are destroyed by the Comanches, I give you warning that I am going to file a claim against you for criminal negligence."

"Hello, orderly!" called the colonel in a passion. "Take this fellow outside the fort, and do it at once!"

"Are you the orderly?" asked Oliver Tay.

"I am, sir," said the soldier.

"Don't 'sir' him!" shouted Chisholm. "Get him out of my sight."

"Orderly," said Oliver Tay, "be good to yourself and keep out of my way. Colonel, I have the pleasure of telling you that you are a contemptible cur, sir! And, if you are worthy of the epaulets you are wearing, I'll have an answer from you later on, about this matter."

Colonel Chisholm was struck dumb. Neither could he stir hand or foot; but, sitting in his chair, he gazed stupidly at the big man, as the latter turned upon his heel and strode from the room.

"I say, Sydham!"

Cousin Peter, very subdued and drawn of face, entered the room, turning his cigar nervously in his fingers.

"You told me something about this relative of yours," said the colonel

viciously; "but if you had told me everything, I should not have consented to see him at all."

"One thing that I intended to say and forgot," said Peter Sydham, biting his lips, "is that Oliver is a very dangerous fellow in a fight, colonel! Very dangerous indeed!"

"You think," smiled the colonel, "that because a fellow manages to knock over a buffalo or two and knife a Mexican in a barroom fight, that he is quite an Achilles. But if this rascal is enough of a gentleman for me to call him out, I'll soon show you the differernce between a rough-and-tumble expert and a bit of pistol work!" The colonel nodded, rather with a secret satisfaction; and he spread the mustaches upon his upper lip with thumb and forefinger.

However, he observed that Peter Sydham had not answered. Indeed, Mr. Sydham's color had not improved a whit. And now he advanced across the room and tapped a pink and pudgy finger upon the desk. "Colonel Chisholm!" said he.

"Well, well?" echoed the colonel, rather angrily.

"Let me assure you, Colonel Chisholm, that I value you too highly to permit you to throw yourself away. There is only one proper way of answering the insult of my stepson. That is to send a couple of sturdy fellows and have them give him a thorough blacksnaking."

The colonel sniffed with disdain. "I can't understand that viewpoint, Sydham," said he.

"You prefer to call him out?" asked Peter Sydham, rather crisply.

"Of course I prefer it. I've done nothing since I came here. I have to let people know that I'm a man able to take care of myself, sooner or later, and why not now?"

"Chisholm," said the trader, shaking his head with the solemnity of his conviction, "if you had the slightest chance, I tell you I detest that scoundrel so thoroughly that I should even encourage you to go ahead with the business. But upon my word of honor, if you stand up to meet him, he will kill you out of hand, with no more trouble and no more concern than you would use in shooting at a helpless pig."

The metaphor was not chosen with any particular delicacy, but at least it contained a certain innate vigor that gave the gallant colonel pause. He had plenty of courage. He had won his very early promotion to this high rank more by rash bravery in the field than by another way. And now he hesitated and stared wistfully at Mr. Sydham. For the whole heart of Chisholm was telling him that he should stand forth on the dueling field in this affair, since no man of honor can be called a cur without resenting it, gun in hand. And yet—there is really no wit or wisdom in throwing away one's life. And, from the conviction with which Mr. Sydham spoke, the colonel felt that to fight against the golden-headed giant would be equivalent to taking an overdose of poison—a swift and painless way of leaving this vale of tears.

"Is he so absolutely fatal?" said the colonel.

Mr. Sydham paused and cast about him for some illustration. Then he said, "You know that these fellows in this part of the world are lovers of battle, Colonel Chisholm?"

"I've been here long enough to learn that, of course!"

"Very well! I can tell you as an assured fact that there is not a man in the town and the country around it who would dream of crossing the path of my cousin. And at short range, colonel, he has a trick of working at his revolver so that it chatters bullets faster than a woodpecker can tap a tree. And every bullet is aimed to split the edge of a shingle at twenty paces. And

therefore, colonel, I say that you surely will not be foolish enough to throw yourself away."

The colonel raised his gentlemanly hand. "Sydham," he said, "I believe that the code stops at certain reasonable points; and I fail to see any reason why a man should throw himself over a cliff for the sake of pleasing Madame Fashion. As for this fellow Tay, I shall simply forget that he exists. I believe that my record will permit me to do so."

Mr. Sydham breathed more easily. For he had arranged with the colonel to supply the soldiers at the fort with certain of the necessities of life at a rate which was very pleasant, to say the least. And Mr. Sydham would have been cut to the quick if the colonel had been snuffed out by the accurate revolver of his cousin. In fact, Mr. Sydham would have felt it to the very depths of his pocketbook.

Outdoors, the orderly had taken Oliver Tay down to the gate of the fort. "All right, Tay," said he. "You've had your money's worth out of the old man, and you've given me mine, too. He's a swine, and I'll see that the rest of the lads know about the talk that you made him swaller."

But Oliver Tay did not seem to hear. His head was too high, and his eyes were too darkened by anxiety.

CHAPTER VI.

PLUNDER AND FIRE.

THROUGH the town of Siddon Flat Oliver Tay went to accumulate a force of fighting men to ride back with him to the defense of his homestead. But he had very odd fortune. For the instant it was known that he was bound on a trip to fight the terrible Comanches, and above all that dreadful chief, White Hawk, there was a great deal of shaking of the head. Men told Oliver that they would be only too pleased to ride forth with him, and that they wished that they might be able to do some service with him against that foe to all men—White Hawk; but, unfortunately, that day they were very pressingly busy. But there was Neighbor Smith. No doubt his hands were free, and he and his two stalwart sons would go with Oliver Tay to the battle. But Neighbor Smith was in the very same case, yet he suggested that Neighbor Johnson would be sure to go.

And so Oliver was thrown from pillar to post until he at length reluctantly admitted to himself that these people would not take such risks for the sake of his farm. Had he been closer in, and his property been close to theirs, then they would have rallied at once around him and fought heartily, like the strong-handed men they were. But he had established a more or less distant outpost, and now he had to pay the penalty.

And, as half a dozen of the frontiersmen reminded him, "This here is the business of the troops. You better go to Colonel Chisholm."

Oliver Tay allowed himself a five-minute delay, and rode back past the Barge farm. Old Samson Barge, he knew, would willingly have gone with him. But Samson Barge hardly knew one end of a rifle from the other; and, besides, he was so rheumatic that he could hardly sit in a saddle. He would at least serve as a mouthpiece for a little message which Oliver intended to leave for the community.

When Oliver reached the front gate, there was Marian waiting for him, flushed with happiness; for he could come in to see her, these busy days, not more than once a week, at the most. He paused by Marian only long enough to frighten her with the cloud on his brow and to ask, "Where's your father?"

She had been raised on the frontier, and therefore she knew enough not to

ask foolish questions. She simply ran on ahead and opened the door to the blacksmith shop, where Samson Barge was grunting with discomfort as he worked the foot lever of the bellows with his rheumatic leg and turned a heating iron bar in the whistling flames.

Then Marian Barge retreated in haste and left the two men together.

Samson Barge regarded the golden-haired giant with awe and in silence. He had never grown accustomed to the idea of such a Titan as a prospective son-in-law; and many a time he had almost wished that Marian could have chosen for herself a hero less magnificent, less beautiful, less famous—and somewhat more safe. Only for the last few months Mr. Barge had grown more contented with Marian's prospects in life, when he saw Oliver Tay settling down on the distant farm in the valley under the mountain. And his approval waxed to enthusiasm when he took note of the tremendous manner in which the giant approached his task, doing three men's work in every day, and running up fence lines, and building sheds, and heaving, and moiling, and toiling until in six months he had accomplished more than most men could possibly have done in two years. And so the farm was growing apace; and, before very long, Marian could go out to become its mistress.

Yet even as a farmer, Oliver Tay was not altogether reassuring. He was a span or two taller than an earth worker need be. And there was sometimes a flash of wildness in his blue eyes that frightened Samson Barge. It frightened him now. And those blue eyes were flashing doubly bright, by contrast with the darkness of the brows.

"Barge," said Oliver, "I've come to tell you that I think the Comanches are about to destroy Loomis Valley. Don't jump and shout. Don't ask what I'm going to do. I've been to the fort; and the colonel tells me that I'm wrong, and that the Comanches are so afraid of him that they wouldn't dare to come as close as Loomis Valley with a war party. I've been through the town, and I've tried to get them together to help me against White Hawk. But this seems to be their busy day. No, Barge, it wouldn't do any good for you to go out there, unless you want to plant your scalp in the valley and break Marian's heart. It wouldn't do any good. It'll be better for you to stay behind. And, if the word comes in that the Comanches have wrecked the valley for me, and left it in ashes, I want you to go to Colonel Chisholm for me and tell him that I believe the government owes me the price of what I've lost."

He left Barge stunned with this announcement and returned to his horse. After that, he turned his course straight across the hills and back toward Loomis Valley, guided all the way by the tall, bald head of Loomis Mountain itself. When he reached the valley edge, it was already too late. He sat in a clump of rocks and calmly smoked a pipe and watched half of his herd of cattle thronging down the pass through the golden light of the late afternoon.

Behind them came the Comanches; and leader of them all was White Hawk, with war feathers fluttering behind his head and shoulders, and his long lance brandished in his hand for very joy. The pace of the cows was not fast enough; and now there was a sweeping charge, and all went forward at a mad gallop. For, after all, the valley was a trifle close to the town; and, if the troopers came out from Siddon Flat, it would be well that the plunder should be well away among the hills.

Oliver Tay, from his place of vantage, with a glass of the first quality, counted them one by one as they rushed forward—seventeen stalwart braves.

And, behold, from the farther end of the valley, a similar wave of cattle was being driven in, with more than a score of red men behind them. And the hay fields suddenly threw up red hands of fire as the Comanches set fire to the standing crop. The fire began to spread in a circle, while the wild men closed on the house itself. At such a distance, Oliver could not hear their shouting, but at least he could see them dancing with joy as they looted the house and poured their plunder forth in the front yard.

It was all done with amazing speed because these were experts at such labors. The house and the sheds were instantly emptied. The mules and the horses were gathered into one herd. The cattle were bunched closely in another, and then the whole procession wound rapidly away from the valley and soon were lost behind the smoke screen which they had thrown up behind them. For now the sheds were caught in the flames, and the long yellow arms of fire crawled inward through the evening shadows and reached the house itself, until it was mantled with a confusion of smoke and flames.

Oliver Tay waited until he had made sure of the destruction of all the thousand of his dollars, and the months of his labor. He was very young. And the time which he had expended in Loomis Valley seemed to him the irreplaceable portion of his loss. For nearly a year he had labored. Now all of that labor was snatched away from him. There remained for his portion the horse which he rode, and the rifle in the case, and the revolver at hip and saddle bow. He had been stripped to the bone; and yet all of this might have been prevented by Colonel Chisholm, if the soldier had chosen. No wonder that Oliver turned his head and looked back in the direction of Siddon Flat with unspeakable rage in his heart.

He could not remain where he was. He would be very late, if he went in now to report the outrage. And so he chose to go forward along the trail which the Comanches were following, and he started at once.

Ah, to have had his three tried friends to help him, to say nothing of the great Venales and his band of thugs and warriors! But he had nothing to stand by him except the might of his own right hand and some remembered wisdom from among the many lessons which they had taught him. How would Antonio Morales have acted—that most famous of Indian fighters—in a case like this? Beyond a doubt he would have followed the marauders, also. But he would have followed them with the greatest care.

"An Indian fights best when he is running away. He shoots straightest over his shoulder," Antonio Morales had been fond of saying; and Oliver Tay remembered that, now. No doubt, therefore, these Comanches would not leave themselves open to any sudden stroke from behind. But instead, they would throw out a rear guard to watch against a surprise attack, and other guards would be pushed out to either side and in front of the main body of warriors and plunder. How should Oliver Tay break through these guards? He did not even attempt it. But, estimating the turns and the windings of the cañon up which White Hawk had gone with his men, Oliver Tay decided that the great Comanche would undoubtedly keep drifting steadily to the left, for the very reason that toward the right and the east lay his natural hunting grounds. And if he kept to the left, he would be bearing along the outer edge of a semicircle, while a pursuer could gain vital ground by riding the chord of the arc.

That was exactly what Oliver did. The moon was not yet up, but thick

as sand on a beach, the sky was strewn with stars and whitened by their crowding rays, when Oliver rode over the edge of the southern cañon wall, and looked down into a thousand-foot chasm, deep in which weltered a huge fire like the red eye of a dragon looking up through the dark waters of a pool.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CAPTURE OF YELLOW WOLF.

HE left the horse on the edge of the cliff, because for the work which he had in mind a horse would be merely an encumbrance. Then he lowered himself down the face of the precipice. It was Antonio Morales who had taught him the greatest secret of mountain climbing.

"Look at the wild goats. They never hesitate because they know that nature never draws a line with a rule. She slopes in or out, and she has her jags and crags which wil make finger holds for you. So keep your body close to the wall, and never look down if you can help it."

It was a very simple rule, but it worked amazingly well. To keep one's body close in, so that there was less leverage against feet and hands, to trust a good deal to nature's rough edges, and to look down as seldom as possible —just often enough to keep the way clearly in mind and waste no effort! So he went down that staggering cliff and found, as usual, that once he was fairly committed to the task, it was easier than it looked. He came down and down until the voices of the redskins thronged up about him, and it seemed that they must surely be marking him as he climbed.

However, they had the glare of their camp fire to blind them; but he was fairly sure that, no matter how cautious they were, and though they might guard the valley, up and down, they would not be apt to take any precautions against an attack from the side, down one of these towering walls. He was right. He reached the bottom of the descent entirely unobserved and crouched to take note of all that was before him.

And the first thing of which he made certain was that in the looting of his house they had not failed to take along the little ten-gallon whisky barrel which, like all frontiersmen, he kept for medicine and for hospitality.

The contents had been distributed through the party, and that was the reason that the uproar of a madhouse rose from around the fire. Half-naked forms leaped and pranced in the light of the flames, staggering and swinging their arms, and shrieking in a frenzy of excitement. Oliver wished, grimly, that he had Morales and Vega and Capiño with him; for he made no doubt, at first, that with their aid he could have routed the entire band.

But then he saw that a few of the entire crew were keeping themselves in hand; and, as he crept nearer, from bush to bush, he saw two drunken braves in vain attempt to press a drink upon a third of the gang. This was a stalwart warrior who sat on his heels at the very edge of the firelight, watching the revels but taking no part in it. And, when Oliver looked more narrowly at him, he made sure that it was the same solitary Comanche whom he had examined through his glass earlier in the day—he who had been cutting up the buffalo in the valley.

Whole shrubs and small dead trees had been piled near the bonfire; and, from time to time, great quantities of wood were thrown into the blaze—so that Oliver himself was half-blinded, and that fact nearly cost him his life. For as he crawled forward, he put his hand suddenly upon warm human flesh.

The sleeping brave started into a sitting posture with a grunt of alarm and disgust; but, before he could make

sure what had happened, Oliver struck him once with the butt of his ready revolver—sure that he would need to strike no more. He felt the bones of the skull crunch in beneath the stroke. Then, crouching behind a shrub, Oliver waited to see what might come of this.

There was only one in the band with ears sharp enough to hear the groan of the dying Comanche, and that was Yellow Wolf, who started now to his feet and strode toward the place from which the sound had come. And it seemed to Oliver Tay, as he watched the brave coming forward, with the firelight washing across his half-naked body, that he had never seen a more magnificent specimen of manhood than this copper-colored hero.

Yellow Wolf came close to the spot, but the fire was too recently in his face for him to see clearly through the shadows. He screened his eyes with his hand and stared about him. Then at last he marked the crumpled body of the dead Comanche and leaned above him with a soft grunt of dismay. He laid hold on the shoulder of the dead man and turned him on his back. He had no time to straighten and give the war cry of alarm, for that instant Oliver was on him. A bone-crushing grip fell on the throat of Yellow Wolf, so that all sounds were stifled before so much as a whisper could be uttered. He reached for the knife in his belt; but, before it could be drawn, a fist as hard and rough as a craggy stone thudded against the base of his jaw—and all the strength and the cunning of Yellow Wolf was lost in darkness.

And now Oliver Tay crouched close over the fallen body, knife in hand. One stroke would dispose of this warrior, also, and leave him free to carry on his work of destruction until White Hawk should curse the day that brought him with his marauders to Loomis Valley. And yet he could not make up his mind to drive the cold steel home. He had seen this fine specimen of manhood in action, and the thought of snuffing out this life overcame Oliver. Another thought came to him—that it would be almost as well to take home one living Comanche as a prisoner as it would be to butcher a dozen here in cold blood. That was not the sort of work for which yellow-haired Oliver was intended. Little Capiño with his ever-ready knife would have been more at home on such an occasion. So he made up his mind, and retreated straightway, carrying with him the limp body of the warrior.

He reached the base of the cliff before Yellow Wolf recovered a little and began to groan and struggle. One grip of the mighty hands of Oliver Tay was enough to convince his captive that he was secured as thoroughly as though steel bands surrounded him. After that, there was no more struggling. A cruelly effective gag was thrust between the teeth of Yellow Wolf; and then Oliver herded him up a winding way which he could distinguish, now, along the face of the cliff—a sort of natural trail which turned and twisted many times but brought them to the top with comparative ease.

There he fastened the hands of the Comanche behind his back with his rawhide lariat and mounted into the saddle. Yellow Wolf made no protest but turned straight across the hills toward the trail for Siddon Flat, as though he knew the mind of his captor perfectly.

For half a mile they continued in this way. Then Oliver removed the gag and watched Yellow Wolf draw two or three deep breaths. That was the only sign which he made of his distress.

Said Oliver gloomily, in Spanish, for he knew that many of this tribe had learned that language during their raids into Mexico:

"What have I done to the Comanches, my friend, that they should burn

my hay and turn my house to ashes and take away my cattle and my mules and my horses?"

The captive returned fluently enough: "An hour ago, I was a man and a Comanche. Now I am a sick dog. What does a dog know of the minds of the great Comanches?"

This seemed to Oliver a rather laconic manner of stating that his prisoner would not talk, and he could not help respecting the fellow all the more. They resumed their journey. A dull moon came up and shone faintly upon them through high-drifting clouds.

"What is your name?" said Oliver.

"I had a name," said the Indian. "Go ask the Comanches if they remember it. Ask the Apaches if they know me and how many of their scalps I took. But I have a name no longer."

Plainly, he was in a suicidal fit of despair; and Oliver murmured soothingly: "A man in his own tepee does not look for enemies, and neither does a brave beside his own camp fire. What has happened to you would not have happened if your friends had not killed their minds with fire water."

Yellow Wolf raised his head with a little snort of contempt and indignation. "That is true," he said, gaining a little of his old self-respect. "The white man always wins, either because he has big medicine or because he knows how to put a red devil into water and leave it behind him for the Indians. How many scalps," he added with a sudden irresistible burst of curiosity, "how many scalps did you take by the edge of the camp fire of White Hawk?"

"Not one," said Oliver, smiling in spite of himself. "There is only one dead Comanche there, and he will go to the happy hunting grounds because his scalp is on his head."

This was a patriotic youth, for now he sighed with relief. He made no inquiry about his own fate, however.

"And how is it," said Oliver Tay, "that a drunken scoundrel like White Hawk can be the leader of heroes like you and send them to strike his blows for him and fight his battles?"

"White Hawk," said the young Indian gravely, "wears seven scalps and they are not all the scalps of Apaches!"

There was a grimness in his voice which kept Oliver Tay from asking what those scalps might be.

"White Hawk," went on Yellow Wolf, "has a great medicine. When he rides on the warpath, the young men do not die, but they come home rich and with scalps."

Oliver Tay said no more. For he saw that he could not extract information from this proud young man; and as for the exchange of interesting viewpoints, how could he expect to understand the secret workings of the mind of the Comanche and how could he hope that the Comanche could understand his? A million years of different ancestry forbade it. So they kept silently to the moonlit trail.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FEAST.

THE moon had left the clouds and hung bright and high in the center of the heavens before they came to Siddon Flat. Oliver had not yet reached the edge of the town when the rapid hoofbeats of horses rattled down the road behind him; and he turned, half in fear lest a flying group of the Comanches might have hunted back toward Siddon Flat to intercept their captured warrior. But under the moon he saw now not the lean silhouette of Indians but men under broad-brimmed, peaked sombreros.

He laid his rifle across the hollow of his left arm and waited until, as they came closer, a shrill cry broke from one of them; and then a deep, ringing bass voice echoed the call. Oliver hastily thrust the rifle into its case and

held out his hands as they swept around him—little Capiño, with his lean, wicked face lighted by pleasure, and big Carpio Vega laughing for joy and relief, and even that somber Antonio Morales smiling a little.

They told their tidings briefly. They had come to Siddon Flat, heard the rumor of Oliver's appeal for help which had not been granted; and then they had swept away to the valley to find what had happened and help if it were not too late. There they had found the smoking ruins of the house and the sheds and the stacks of hay, and they had come foaming back to Siddon Flat to report to Colonel Chisholm what they had seen and offer their services in guiding the troops. For they made no doubt that the flames which burned the house had consumed also the body of their friend, Oliver Tay; and they were hot for vengeance.

While Vega and Capiño related this tale, Antonio Morales was surveying the captive with his melancholy eyes that saw all things. "You have taken a prize," he said at last to Oliver Tay. "This tribe hasn't made a raid in the last three years without having Yellow Wolf in the thick of it. And this is Yellow Wolf in person."

So the eyes of the others turned back upon the captive, and the Comanche bore their scrutiny with a calm indifference.

"I've heard of Yellow Wolf," said Carpio Vega. "They say that he's so strong with a bow that he will shoot an arrow clean through a buffalo, now and then. And with a knife, he's a raging devil. And with a spear, he's a regular old-fashioned knight."

"He fought three Apaches two years ago," put in Capiño, who seemed to know of the prisoner as much as the others. "He was rushed by them. He killed one of them at a distance with an arrow. He took the second through the throat with his spear. And then, while the third was closed with him and running a knife into his body, this Yellow Wolf took the knife away from him and killed the last of the lot. But he was so weak from the wounds he had received that he barely was able to crawl away and nurse himself back to life, and so he missed all three of the scalps. But, Don Oliver, how did you get him?"

"I followed them up the north ravine from Loomis Valley, and I went down to the edge of their camp-fire light, to see what could be done with them. I put my hand on one of them by bad luck and had to knock him in the head when he grunted. Yellow Wolf, as you call him, came to see what was wrong; and so I took him away with me. I didn't have it in me to strangle such a fine-looking fellow, even if he was a Comanche."

Antonio Morales hissed softly between his teeth, and his eyes turned to balls of fire. "Dios, Dios, to have been there with you, brother! But there are enough left for our hunting."

"Speak to him, Antonio," said Oliver, "because you have their tongue; and ask the man why they came to raid me?"

Morales broke readily into the Comanche dialect. It was even said that, during his youth, he had been stolen away by these formidable people and had spent some years among them, which accounted to a certain extent for his skill on horseback and for his peculiar ability as a hunter and fighter. Yellow Wolf was so pleased to hear his own tongue, that he answered at once.

"He says," translated Morales, "that so far as he knows, none of the Comanches have any grudge against Don Oliver, except that White Hawk very much wanted to get rid of you, brother. And he offered ten of his best horses for the young brave who would bring

in the scalp of the golden hair. And, finally, he sent out Yellow Wolf as a scout to learn what he could learn. But Yellow Wolf saw from a distance that you carried rapid lightning in your hand and were such big medicine that he saw you were not meant for him. He simply sent in his signal to White Hawk, in the distance; and so the lot of them simply came on to finish you off."

"Come in with me to the colonel," said Oliver Tay. "The sun is coming up in another moment. We'll have breakfast together; and then we'll take him to see the colonel, scalps and all. Now tell me about the rest of my friends. And what is Venales doing? And where the the band lying now? And is there any word lately of Diego Venustiano?"

He threw the questions at them with a gay abandon, and they answered them as fast as they could.

Roderigo Venales was not a day's march away, hungry to have Oliver Tay back with him, if he could get him; and for that special purpose he had permitted the three of them to make the ride to the town of Siddon Flat to try to persuade the new farmer to take a vacation from his cares. And the whole band was anxious to have him back. As for Diego Venustiano, he had combed the mountains for them with a veritable army under his command. But still they had managed to escape from him. And they had dodged the officers of the law, and the rapid scouting parties of soldiers which were hunting for them steadily, here and there. There had been only one skirmish, when they were hemmed into a narrow, blind cañon by three score troopers.

"But the instant that we knew we were in a pocket," said Carpio Vega, "and before they could very well guess that they had trapped us, we whirled around and rode smash through them; and they fired at us as wildly as though they were blindfolded. We had no hurt at all."

"You forget Pedro, the Red," put in Capiño. "He was struck by a bullet that raked across his head. He died a day later, asking for red wine and a confessor."

"I said that we had no loss at all," said Carpio Vega again. "When we lose a fool and a drunkard, it is a blessing and not a pity."

Talking in this manner, they reached the edge of the town.

"Is it safe for us to show ourselves?" asked Carpio Vega.

"If it was before it is now. They know little about you here," smiled Oliver Tay. "They hear plenty about Roderigo Venales, from time to time; but he keeps his work well south of the river. If you're recognized here, it will be only by one of your own countrymen."

"That is a chance worth taking," said Capiño. "I smell roasting kid even as early as this. And I could eat an entire goat. I want wine, too, Carpio, in spite of what you say about drunkards. I want wine, and then I shall sing; for I am as happy to have Don Oliver with us as a wild horse when it sees its native mountains. Hello! Señora, here are four hungrier men than you can possibly have in your house, and a good wild Indian to pick the bones of that kid when we have finished with it. We shall pay you enough to buy a whole flock to take its place. Do we eat here, tell me? Or do we take good luck to that other house down the street which has a smoking chimney, also?"

"That is the Moreño woman," said the housewife eagerly. "She cooks no flesh except that of goats so old that it is like carving strips of leather. Come in, come in! I have a clean floor and goat skins for all of you. And may my tongue be withered if I charge you

more for the cooked meat than the butcher would ask for it raw."

So they sat in the raw morning air inside the house of the woman, all in a circle, with the sleepy husband and two half-grown boys stumbling here and there, anxious to serve these unexpected guests, and pouring out raw Mexican red wine into cups for them. For they could see at a glance that these were not ordinary guests; and, if they had doubted, the sight of a real Indian as a prisoner would have convinced them that it was a great occasion.

It was pleasant to Oliver Tay. For he had spent so many months at hard labor that he had forgotten, almost, the cheerful ways of these men who lived outside the law, beyond the law. That other way, inside it, brought results, parhaps, in the long run; but it meant constant work, and a weary monotony of days one as like the other as twin brothers. But though these men toiled, they always had their eyes fixed on goals so rich and shining that their labor on the way seemed nothing.

"But when I left you, you were all rich," he said. "What has become of your money?"

Capiño made a wry face. "Tell the story of each of us, Carpio," he said, and covered his eyes with both hands, childishly, until the stories should be ended.

"Morales," said Carpio Vega, "went to Juarez and tried to double his prize with cards. And in two weeks he was naked. Capiño rode down to Vera Cruz and saw a pretty girl and decided that he would marry and become a householder. But he woke up one morning without a wife, without his money, and not even a trail by which to follow them. I went to Mexico City and for six weeks I forgot that I was Carpio Vega. But to forget costs money. However, I have no regrets."

That ended the story, and Oliver did not need to ask about the others in the band who had taken such treasure from Diego Venustiano; for he knew that their winnings had all gone much the same course. So he let the talk turn to happier things, while they feasted, all saving the Indian, Yellow Wolf, who would touch nothing during his captivity but seemed to have his stern eyes already fixed upon his death.

CHAPTER IX.

RUMOR.

WHEN one thinks how the strange destiny of Oliver Tay began to work, it seems as a matter of fact as though there had been a sinister conspiracy on the part of fate to defraud him of his just chances in life. For all who have read the history of Oliver Tay and considered it carefully, and all who have only had it by casual hearsay, must agree that there was nothing of the criminal about this man.

But he had developed certain bad qualities of temperament, rather than actual tendencies to sin. That is to say, the long quiet in which he passed the early years of his life, and the care with which his mother had shielded him had created in the manner of Oliver and to a certain extent in his mind a false calm. And a natural tempestuousness of disposition had been thoroughly masked over. It was not until he began to live with Roderigo Venales and his men that Oliver, at length, was able to express himself freely. And there he found himself among circumstances and men so very wild that still there were more opportunities than he needed; and you might say that he never reached bursting point.

But now matters had altered a great deal. Oliver Tay had been placed in such circumstances that he had finally lost his temper completely and had expressed his opinion of a colonel of the

United States army in a ringing voice and in very broad language. And that outbreak was only a sign of more that was to follow. Still, there is little doubt that had nothing untoward happened, Oliver Tay would have confined his outbreaks to language alone. It was only the singular misfortune of Oliver that placed him in a situation where deeds were more to the point than words. Where words, as a matter of fact, were of no value whatever. So we come to the joint where this odd tangle must be explained. We go back to the time when the companions were breakfasting on roast kid in the very early morning, in that humble house in Siddon Flat.

In the middle of the feast, little Capiño, hearing hoofbeats swinging down the street, glided to the door and looked out—suspicious little snake that he was—and then turned at once and said to his friends: "It is Pedrillo. What can have brought him here? Has he come to call us back? Hello, friend" —this to the woman of the house—"if we are asked for, there is no one here except your family. Close the door."

"It is too late," said Carpio Vega, who scorned such foolish and rather unmanly stratagems. "Keep the door open. If Pedrillo has a message for us, let him deliver it."

A moment more, and a dashing figure of a man pitched out of the saddle and landed running. While the trained mustang was checking itself on braced and sliding hoofs, the caballero had turned in at the door of the house and stood suddenly panting before them—covered with dust, and a dust cloud still about him, but nevertheless brilliant through the mist as a sun, almost. Flaming gold buttons, and a golden scarf with a vast crimson fringe, and silver work here and there, and a radiant shirt of blue silk, and a closely fitted Mexican jacket, and even, on his heels, long arched Mexican spurs of gold, and a hat banded and heavy not with gold only, but with jewels also—such was the vision that flashed upon the eyes of the men in the shack. He took off his sombrero and waved it in cheerful greeting.

Said Carpio Vega sternly: "Do you know what men on this side of the river will say of you, Pedrillo? That you are too beautiful to be good." And he smiled a little.

But Pedrillo paid no attention to this remark. He had crossed the room with long, quick strides, and now he clasped with both his hands one of the big hands of Oliver Tay.

"Don Oliver, Don Oliver, do you remember me after almost a year? I am Pedrillo. Do you remember? When Venustiano's——"

"Hush!" said Oliver Tay smiling. "It is easy to say too much and very hard to call the words back. I remember you perfectly, Pedrillo. I am very happy to see you."

He looked to the man and the woman of the house, but they held up their hands and smiled. They could guess that such finery as Pedrillo wore had not been bought with honest money; but nevertheless, they admired his magnificence just as much—or perhaps a little bit more. For what is inherited money? Many a fool has it to spend, to be sure.

"We have no ears, friends," said the householder and his wife.

However, Pedrillo had been sufficiently warned, and now he rounded into the ear of Oliver Tay: "Venales is not two miles away. He sent me to find you. He cannot show himself in Siddon Flat, he might be known. Too many people have seen his face. He begs you to come out with me to visit him."

There was a flash in the eyes of Oliver Tay. He knew well enough what Venales would want of him. And now he was foot free and hand free,

to be sure, and ready for a new start—no matter in what direction. But an instant of thought made him shake his head. There is no folly like placing oneself in the way of temptation, and the eyes of Oliver darkened again. "I must stay here, Pedrillo," he began, "for——"

"Listen, listen, Don Oliver," pleaded the youth, biting his lip with anxiety. "Venales has a five-year-old gray horse. He is wonderful. He climbs a mountainside as though he were flying it with the wings of an eagle. And Roderigo has promised him to me if I only so much as bring you out to talk with him. What harm is there in talking, Don Oliver? What harm is there in that?"

This naïve appeal made Oliver laugh; and, when a man has laughed, half of his wisdom is tossed over his shoulder. "Very well," said he. "I'll go along back with you."

"God bless you, my kind friend," said young Pedrillo. "I shall have the gray. And I shall laugh at Roderigo, who swore that you would never come." He was fairly dancing with joy.

"Listen to me, Carpio," said Oliver Tay, turning to handsome Vega. "You can guess where I am going. Tell me, are you three safe in Siddon Flat?"

"We are safe enough. But you, Oliver, are you going——"

"Hush! I shall be back inside of the hour. Do not have any fear of that. In the meantime, look to Yellow Wolf. Take care of him as though he had a white skin because, no matter what deviltry he may have been up to in Loomis Valley, I have an idea that he has a heart as white as any man's. Adios, amigos!" And he was gone through the door with young Pedrillo.

Carpio Vega turned full upon the Indian brave, and he found that Yellow Wolf was staring after the departing figure of big Oliver Tay with a strange mixture of awe and wonder. And Carpio raised his finger. "Watch him, Antonio," he said to Morales. And Antonio Morales merely smiled, with infinite wickedness and infinite patience, like one who knew this business that was in his hands.

Now that they were left with the Indian on their hands, and Oliver Tay gone to see the leader of their band, if all had gone well nothing should have happened while Oliver was away. But all did not go well, and that was owing to the prime creator of trouble in this world—rumor, which has the thousand tongues. For rumor had heard a whisper in the house of where the three waited; and how could it well be otherwise, seeing that there were two children and a woman in the place?

Rumor flew out of that house and sped across the village, and her tidings ran through ears like quicksilver and passed from tongue to tongue. She started as a mere whisper, she ended by being a shouting voice that reached the fort of Siddon Flat and hummed at the ears of the sentry at the gate, and passed instantly from him to his sergeant, and ran in haste from the sergeant to the lieutenant of the watch, and sped from the lieutenant to the captain of his company, and now behold rumor, in the gallant person of the captain, standing at the colonel's door. He was admitted and found the colonel at breakfast with his crony, the polite trader, Mr. Peter Sydham.

The colonel was not pleased with this interruption. His temper was never good before noon in the day, and now it was very touchy indeed; for he was in the midst of certain busy plans with Mr. Sydham concerning contracts for supplies at the fort.

For instance, there were certain ways in which cheap beef could be bought, from certain people who brought in cattle from the range without examining with too foolish a scrupulousness

into the identity of the brands and the owners thereof. And the wise young colonel saw no good reason why some of that cheap supply of beef should not be diverted to the fort as a market. In that case, he could take part of the profits; and Mr. Sydham could take another part. So both parties would rest contented; the soldiers would have their beeves, and the government would not have to pay a whit more for meat than it had ever paid in the past.

This was a line of thought so flawless that Mr. Sydham could follow it without the slightest difficulty, and he freely expressed his admiration at the clear-mindedness of the colonel. For his part, he declared that he knew exactly in what quarters to look for such beef. And, as a matter of fact, the same brilliant idea had occurred to him. Except that he felt a more equal division of the spoils would hardly be equitable. For all the colonel had to do was to see that the quartermaster accepted the new contract. Whereas Mr. Sydham incurred all the unpleasant necessity of dealing with the rustlers who brought in the beeves—low fellows who soiled the ears of a gentleman with their profane conversation. So that Mr. Sydham believed that if he took two parts of the spoils of war and the colonel accepted a third portion, it would be eminently fair.

"I understand you perfectly," said the colonel.

"And besides," said Mr. Peter Sydham, "you must know that there is a great deal of danger, really. You can't trust thieves. And if these fellows let the word come out that I have been buying rustled cattle, why, it will not be well for me. It would ruin me as a trader in this part of the world forever and a day."

"That is sad," said the colonel, sympathetically. "But as a matter of fact, I am pressed for money. I have certain obligations in the East—family to keep up, you know. And besides, as the matter stands, though I understand exactly how you feel, perhaps I could find some other person who would think that he could undertake the job on a fifty-per-cent basis." He leaned back and spread out his palms in a gesture of regret.

Peter Sydham blinked a little and nodded, also. It was a bitter pill to swallow; but, as the colonel had so gently suggested, there probably were others who would be most willing and even anxious to meet his terms. Mr. Sydham was considering, and on the point of surrendering, when the summons came at the door; and the captain was brought in.

The latter saluted like a perfect model of a captain, which he was. And with his heels clicked together, and his chest thrust out, and his neck as stiff as a ramrod, he made his report: "Bad news from the town, sir; so serious that I thought I had better bring the immediate report of it to your ears."

"Another gun fight, I suppose, another gun fight," said the colonel angrily. "I am not the undertaker and professional brother to the ruffians in this community, Lodge. I thank goodness that I have no interest in them. So let them bury their dead and have done with it. I shall not order out a single man."

"I beg your pardon, sir. Not gun fights—not in the town, that is to say. Indians—the Comanches—have been raided by night."

CHAPTER X.

FOUR PRISONERS.

THE colonel had his faults, but he had his virtues also. He had a mind that worked as rapidly and as accurately as a steel trap, and he had enough presence of mind to have commanded an army on a field of battle. He said quietly now: "That is a differ-

ent matter. The Comanches are a friendly tribe nominally. What fools have dared to raid them? Mexicans, I suppose?"

"I hoped that it would be that," said the captain, "but it seems that there is an American citizen mixed up in the affair and that makes it our business also, I presume."

"An American citizen? Some infernal renegade!" snapped the colonel.

"A fellow named Oliver Tay, I believe," said the captain.

The colonel looked at Mr. Sydham, and Mr. Sydham looked at the colonel. There was a mutual understanding of great depth between them.

"And I believe," said the captain, "that he is not a renegade but has seemed to be an honest farmer."

"That will do, captain," said his commanding officer. "You have a grave fault, Lodge. You don't keep your eyes and your ears open, and that's what you must do in a frontier community. I know Tay. A ruffian with a gentleman's manners—up to a certain point. Absolutely capable of conducting a raid on peaceful Indians! Eh, Sydham?"

"Frightfully sorry to say so," said Peter Sydham. "But the fact is, a very violent nature—and he was here talking nonsense about Comanches only yesterday."

"There's nothing to do, captain," said the commander of the fort, "except to seize the entire party and bring them before me at once. Can they be found?"

"They are in a house in the town, now."

"Excellent. I'll be glad to see this fellow Tay again, face to face. A little happier to see him than he will be to see me, I take it! Take your company——"

"There are only four in the entire party, sir."

"Take plenty of men, Lodge. When you are dealing with desperadoes, numbers are never foolish. You cannot play too safe. Have them here as fast as you can. I'm glad that you've brought this news to me promptly, Lodge. National complications are apt to rise out of those raids. The entire Indian tribe is likely to take the warpath on account of some such outrage. What did Tay do?"

"How many he scalped, no one knows. But he has brought a prisoner back with him."

"Some chief to hold for ransom, I suppose," said the colonel. "Very well. Have them here at once. I'm impatient to see them. Be sure that you use the Indian well."

And Captain Lodge straightway marched out an entire platoon and doubled them down the village street at full speed. Rumor had roused them, and rumor led them straight to the correct house; and all in a moment armed men with fixed bayonets flooded around the little house. A window was kicked open by Morales—behold, the whole garden was packed with brown-faced soldiers. Carpio Vega tore down the rear door, and recoiled instantly before half a dozen leveled bayonets. They were surrounded and pressed against the wall instantly. But they were not yet down. There was a pair of pistols in the hands of Capiño and of Morales, also. And Carpio Vega carried a pair of his famous revolvers. They covered the invading riflemen.

"Now," said Carpio Vega, speaking his perfect English, "let's see this game start, my friends. We have done no harm in this part of the world. We have nothing to answer for. If you have come to arrest us, you've come to arrest the wrong men. And I want to ask you, at once, to bring forward your officer in command for an explanation."

"We'll explain afterwards," said the sergeant, pressing through the back

door. But he stopped when he saw these three faces, ranged sternly in a semicircle in front of the impassive Comanche, Yellow Wolf.

"Captain Lodge! You'd better come in here to talk!"

Captain Lodge came in haste "You'll only be held for an investigation," said the captain soothingly. "All that we want is the freedom of the Indian, of course——"

"You can't touch him," said Carpio Vega. "We are holding him here on our promise to a friend."

"You'll have to forget that promise," said the captain. "I have orders to set him free."

"That's a thing which we cannot do," said Vega.

"I have power to make you," said the captain.

"It will cost you you ten men to kill the three of us," said Vega; "and you shall be the first of the ten, depend upon it."

Captain Lodge, for a moment, wished that he had not blundered so hasily into this crowded little house. But then, he was a brave youth; and he recovered his presence of mind at once. He said, "I have been sent to bring you to the fort; and I'll do it, if I have to die and half my men with me. If you can suggest any compromise that will get you to the fort I'm willing to listen. I don't want to be unreasonable!"

"That's very kind," said Carpio Vega. "Tell us why we should go to the fort at all? What have we done?"

"Raiding a friendly tribe——"

"We've raided no friendly tribe."

"My colonel has sent me here to take you," said Captain Lodge. "I've waited long enough. It's my duty to warn you——"

Carpio Vega looked into the face of the captain and saw two important things—that this youngster was in the first place perfectly brave, and in the second place that he was very excited. And, putting the two together, Carpio Vega knew that it was time to surrender—but not unconditionally.

He said: "I'll make this agreement with you. I'll go with you to the fort, and you can take the Indian with us, so long as you'll agree that Yellow Wolf is not to be set free until Oliver Tay agrees to it. We'll stay there willingly until our conduct has been examined into. Is that entirely satisfactory?"

The captain hesitated. "That seems a fair statement of terms," said he. "I ask you, Sergeant Barry, if you see anything wrong in accepting this offer?"

"Kind of looks to me, sir," said the sergeant appealed to, "that there's six reasons for it, and not one ag'in it!" And he glanced with a sour grin at the steady guns in the hands of the three Mexicans.

"I agree with you," said the captain. "I'll make that agreement."

"Will you shake hands on it, with each of us?"

"Of course."

Three strong, quick brown hands caught his and in another moment the procession started for the fort. The weapons of the three had been taken from them, with the exception of Capiño's knife; for he swore that sooner than give up that knife, he would part with his right hand. The captain did not think it worth while to insist on the point. So they marched toward Fort Siddon; and, first in the procession, escorted rather than guarded by the soldiers, with his hands now free, and his head as high as ever, was Yellow Wolf.

Just what had happened, he had not the slightest idea, but he was fully able to comprehend that a turn for the better had taken place in his affairs due to the arrival of the soldiers. And now he was more highly regarded by them, apparently, than were the three Mexi-

cans who stalked behind him, each closely guarded.

They reached the fort, they passed through the gate, and they were brought before Colonel Randolf Chisholm in his room of audience. And Peter Sydham, still in the next room, listened with a beating heart and a hungry ear and a soul of malice, hoping to hear the voice of Oliver Tay. There was no giant Oliver among them!

"How is this, how is this, captain?" demanded the colonel. "Have you missed the worst man of the lot?"

"Oliver Tay was not with him, sir!"

"Set out and find him. Mount fifty men and scour the country for him. I must have him. These others are nothing, compared with him; because, when you get to the bottom of the business, you'll find that he was the root and source of all the trouble. Go at once!"

And the captain went.

CHAPTER XI.

WAITING.

IT left the young colonel facing the three Mexicans and the Comanche. He felt himself swelling with virtuous wrath. And so he began simply, in a small way, as one sure of the enormity of the crimes of those who stood before him.

"What harm," said he, "has this Indian ever done to you?"

"None," said Carpio Vega, who was always the spokesman.

"And with no harm done," said the colonel, "you seized him by force."

"We did not," said Carpio Vega; "but Oliver Tay took him, out of a whole war party."

"Oliver Tay? Oliver Tay?" echoed the colonel wrathfully. "And can you tell me what possible excuse that young man could offer for such an act while we are at peace with the Comanches?"

Carpio Vega was a man of much self-control; and, while Antonio Morales and little Capiño showed their teeth like angry wolves, Vega said merely, "Perhaps Don Oliver was hasty. But he grew a little impatient. It irritated him when he saw his cattle and horses driven off."

"Ha?" echoed the colonel. "Does he accuse them of that? But I tell you, I know that most of the cattle rustling is done by the white men themselves, and then blamed upon the Indians. Is that all?"

"Not quite," said Carpio Vega.

"What else, then? What else, man?" snapped the colonel.

"Why," said Carpio gravely, "it is a matter of fact that this same Comanche and the rest of his war party burned the sheds and the barns and the haystacks and the plows and tools of Oliver Tay, and finished off by plundering his house and setting fire to that, also. So that up in Loomis Valley there is only a drift of ashes and blackened timbers where there was once a fine farm."

The colonel listened with a flushed face and with startled eyes. For he could not help remembering that this was the very danger which Oliver Tay had feared, and which he had brought word of to the fort. His mind flashed back to army headquarters, and to a court-martial for neglect of duty. "What proof? What proof?" asked the colonel. "What proof that the Comanches did this thing?"

"Oliver Tay saw it with his own eyes," said Carpio dryly; "and, to get a witness of the fact, he followed the Comanches, and took this man alive and brought him back."

The colonel was stunned. Mr. Sydham had warned him that young Tay was dangerous; but the colonel could hardly conceive of a man foolhardy enough to approach, single-handed, the camp fire of marauding Indians, and actually to bring off a living prisoner

as a proof of what he had done. So he straightway ordered the three Mexicans and the Indian into confinement.

"We will search this matter to the roots," said the colonel. "Now where is Oliver Tay?" He called in Peter Sydham.

"You have put me in the wrong, Sydham," he said. "This Oliver Tay we think to be a scoundrel, but even a scoundrel may have the right on his side now and then. It seems that his farm was raided and burned to a cinder, and these Comanches have done the trick. I am horribly in the wrong, Sydham, owing to your advice."

"Wait a few hours, and you'll find that Oliver Tay has put himself far more in the wrong than you," said Peter Sydham with a faint smile.

"It is a time for action," said the colonel, "not for waiting. There is nothing more deadly than to do nothing when things are going wrong." It was an old maxim which he had inherited from his father.

"However, you should wait," said Peter Sydham. "I tell you that I know the blood of these Tays. There was his uncle who came West and lived like a wild man and became a great trading agent. There was his father who loved a duel better than a dance. There was his grandfather who captained a privateer in the war of 1812 and finally was blown out of the water because he insisted on fighting a man-of-war at half pistol shot! And the further you go back in the history of the Tays the deeper you'll find them dipped in fighting. It's the sign of the clan. And now you have sent the captain for Oliver, but the captain won't come back with him."

"Ah," said the colonel, "you take a great deal for granted." But, nevertheless, he was impressed by the surety of Mr. Sydham.

"I take a great deal for granted, because I know these people perfectly. All that you need to do is to keep the Mexicans and the Indian in captivity for a few days."

"And then?"

"Oliver Tay will come to get them out."

"Snap his fingers in the face of the United States army? Tush, Sydham! Impossible!"

"You will see," said Peter Sydham. "I tell you, I know this fellow. Now at the present time he is in a position to make a complaint against you to your commanding officer. But if he tries to take the law into his own hands —that would remove a burden from your shoulders, Colonel Chisholm?"

"Gad," said the colonel, "you are a clever fox, Sydham! Tell me why you hate the boy so thoroughly? Is it because, as the rumor has it, you've slipped his inheritance out of his pocket, and married his mother so that he wouldn't sue you for what you took?"

Peter Sydham started to grow indignant. But then he thought better of it and leaned back in his chair with a shrug of his shoulders. "I don't pretend that I'm disinterested," said he. "He's a poisonous rascal, Chisholm. I'll never be better contented than when I hear that he has gone to his long account. And I begin to think that you have the same attitude toward him."

The colonel began to frown. Then he, also, changed his mind; and the two smiled at one another in a sinister agreement that boded very ill for Oliver Tay.

But Oliver had no thought of the colonel and Peter Sydham at that moment, for he was in the act of dismounting with his guide at the narrow mouth of the cañon whose boulder-strewn floor angled sharply up into the mountains, some two short miles from Siddon Flat. He had no time to take a single step when a man with a nerv-

ous step and keen, impatient eyes came out before him and then went hastily toward him with a shout. The call brought a swarm of a dozen men from the boulders and they rushed about Oliver Tay—wild, unshaven, fiery-eyed fellows who wrung his hand and called his name as though he were the brother of them all. Oliver Tay of flawless ancestry, brother to these case-hardened outlaws and cutthroats and robbers! A year dropped from him. He could see the other days when he had ridden with them, and camped with them, and learned their ways. And it seemed to Oliver that that had been the one happy and free time in his life.

Then Roderigo Venales waved the others away. He took Oliver apart, and they sat together on a broad-backed stone. "I have heard everything," said he, "that White Hawk's war party has done to you and your farm. And I've come to ask you again, Oliver. Are you ready to join us?"

Oliver sighed. And he looked around him at the brown, sun-brightened faces of the mountains near at hand, and the more distant peaks looming through tender mists of blue. Then he shook his head. "To be a free man—that's very well for me," said he. "But to hold a gun under the nose of a man and ask for his money, to stop a train, to raid a pack line of mules—could I do that? No, Venales, I couldn't—though there is much that calls me to be a border bandit."

The other merely smiled. "We are not fools enough to ask you to," said he. "Nor even to want you to. Would I use my hunting knife to chop wood, or my ax to break stone? Every man has his particular use. And we have a need for you. I can plan the work we have to do. With Vega and Morales I can lead the men to the work I lay out.

"But, after that, there is the duty of dividing the spoils. And in the camp there are always a thousand disputes arising. We need a judge. Last month I lost three of my best men through knife fights. It's what ruins us. We no sooner have a strong band together than fights break them up. We need a judge and there's only one man in the world whose honesty we know and trust, and whose courage we have proved, also. We mean you, Oliver. And that is why I have come back here again to ask for you. We don't expect you to ride with us in our raids. We don't wish you to stop any man with a filled wallet. The more honestly you treat the world, the more we can honor your judgments over us. What do you answer to that?"

Oliver took out his hunting knife, long bladed, heavy in the handle, balanced to perfection. There was a young sapling with a three-inch stem some paces away; and, as he juggled the knife thoughtfully up and down in his fingers, he suddenly spied the little tree, its silver bark glistening in the sun. His hand darted forward, the knife slid from his fingers and became a bright streak that ended abruptly. Yonder stood the knife fixed almost to the hilt in the trunk that was shaking there with a sharp, shrill humming sound, like that of an angry hunting wasp. Capiño had taught him that valuable trick.

"It is all very well," said Oliver Tay with another sigh. "And, if I could trust myself as much as you trust me, I think that I might go with you."

He brought into his hand a revolver with a lightning gesture. It spouted a sudden cloud of smoke, jagged across with lightning streaks of red fire. And the hunting knife suddenly loosened and fell from the tree to the ground. So accurately had those shots been placed that they had torn away the wood and literally blown the knife loose without touching it.

"But," sighed Oliver, "I have learned some things too well to trust myself. And suppose that I got tired of throwing knives and bullets at trees, Venales? Have you thought of that? Suppose that I grew interested in living targets? No, at heart I, too, am a border bandit."

CHAPTER XII.

COUSIN VS. COUSIN.

IF Roderigo Venales had been a little more of a rascal and a little less of a man, he might have tried persuasion; but, as it was, he could not help remembering that if ever a man had owed his life to another, he, Venales, had surely owed his existence to Oliver Tay.

And therefore he did not strive to persuade. He merely said: "Wherever we are, Oliver, we are waiting for you and hoping to have you with us. Adios, then, amigo! Go quickly before the others see you going, or they will try to hold you with their hands and keep you with them. For a fortnight, now, there has been no talk except of how we may get you back to us. We have ridden five hundred miles for nothing."

So Oliver went slowly back toward Siddon Flat, filled with regrets—not regrets, surely that he had given up the life of an outlaw, but deep regrets that he could not use the kindness which he felt for these wild fellows and which they felt for him. He went on, as I was saying, at a slow pace, with his head down, when he was suddenly encountered on the road on the outskirts of the village by a squad of four of the hard-riding cavalry who were under the command of the colonel at the fort; and now they had that same weather-bitten sergeant at their head who had presided at the taking of the three Mexicans.

So he simply threw his cavaliers in a loose semicircle; and when Oliver Tay looked up, he found himself thickly surrounded, just as he reached the mouth of a little alley.

"Put up your hands!" the sergeant was saying.

Oliver obediently raised them above his shoulders and looked with his fearless eyes into the face of the sergeant. "And what is all of this about?" he asked calmly.

"Nothing of importance," said the sergeant, "except that you'll go along with us to the fort, my hearty, and join up with your greaser pals, there."

"My greaser pals?" echoed Oliver Tay calmly.

"The three that was taking care of the Comanche," said the sergeant. "They're all waiting for you, old-timer. Are you ready to come along peaceable? The colonel'll be glad to see you. Fall in behind him, Murphy and Jones. Take his bridle, Griggs. Harrison, you might take his guns."

They closed upon Oliver Tay with the assurance of men whose duty is just about accomplished, and certainly the idea of resistance had never occurred to one of them. For they had five guns to cover Oliver Tay; and he was a lone man, with his hands above his head. But the mention of two things had vastly disturbed him. In the first place, he was stung to the quick to know that, on account of him, the Mexicans had been taken into the fort with Yellow Wolf. In the second place, the mention of the colonel was like a knife thrust to him, for he knew that after the manner in which he had parted with Chisholm only the day before, there would be no tender treatment in store for him at the fort.

"I'd like to know what I'm accused of," said Oliver Tay.

"Accused of messing up half of the Comanche nation and getting them ready for a war rampage in revenge," said the sergeant. "Come alive, Smith!"

"All right," said Private Smith, "as soon as I can——"

The rest of his speech remained unuttered, for Oliver Tay had dropped his great hands from the air upon the unlucky sergeant. That gallant soldier had not even a ghost of a chance to defend himself before he was torn from the saddle, twisted over in the air; and, before his first yell of alarm had begun to ring through the air, his body was being securely gripped, and he was held as a sort of shield between Oliver Tay and the guns of the cavalrymen. And Oliver, with the pressure of his knees, turned his horse into the alley mouth. "Keep back your men, sergeant," he said, "and there'll be no harm done you. But if they close on me, I'll wring your neck first and then wring a few of theirs."

"Keep back, boys!" screeched the sergeant. "I'll be all right if you don't rush him. Larry, for goodness' sake hold off and keep away."

There was a snarl from the soldiers; but they would not disobey these pleadings, and so Oliver reined his horse into the momentary security of the alley. There he flung the sergeant to the ground, not hard enough to stun him, but hard enough to make him groggy on his feet for a moment, while Oliver turned his mount and sped away. He doubled straight back on the next street, turned again, and presently he was riding boldly down the main street of Siddon Flat while a hue and cry went crashing away through a far corner of the town. He went out of Siddon Flat, and he went straight back into the hills. There he paused to think the matter over.

From every angle it was a most disagreeable affair. If he moved in this matter, he was directly offending the majesty of the government of the United States. And if he did not move, then three of his friends would be left to rot in prison, or, worse still, they would be kept until some one recognized them as members of the gang of international criminals led by the celebrated Roderigo Venales.

So, with these thoughts bothering him, Oliver Tay grew gloomier and gloomier.

At length, he turned the head of his horse across country; and, turning down the first gulch, he came crashing straight into the view of none other than Mr. Peter Sydham. That gentleman, riding a dainty-stepping high-blooded horse, was returning after a little morning fishing expedition to secure the trout for his own lunch; for he was a fellow with a most fastidious appetite. He had a full basket under his elbow; and his heart was very high, when he unluckily came upon Oliver Tay. Mr. Sydham was not a coward; but now he gasped, leaned over the pommel of his saddle, and spurred for safety.

"Come back!" called the mellow voice of Oliver. "Come back, or I'll shoot your horse from under you."

Mr. Sydham turned and looked back, obediently; and, as he saw the long rifle that glimmered at the shoulder of Oliver, he knew that this young man could verily live up to his word—every letter of it. Therefore Mr. Sydham reluctantly reined in his horse and returned. He sat the saddle biting his fat lips. "You startled me, Oliver," he admitted.

"That's why I wanted to have you back here, Cousin Peter," said Oliver Tay. "If you had stopped willingly for a chat, I would never have thought of bothering you; but, when a fellow turns pale, it begins to look as though something is on his conscience. When he deliberately runs away, why, Cousin Peter, that would be taken in any court as a direct proof, wouldn't it? You're something of a lawyer, I believe. Tell me if I'm not right!"

Cousin Peter had turned from white

to red. "As a matter of fact, Oliver," said he, "you've become such a rough-handed fellow that I'm rather in doubt of what you might do; and you haven't been very friendly."

"The point is," said Oliver, "that I want to find out what could have been bearing down on your conscience so heavily, just now. And could it, by any chance, have had anything at all to do with the quarter of a million that Crossman Tay left to me and which you manipulated away while I was in Mexico?"

"Good gracious, Oliver," said Mr. Sydham, "does your mind still turn on that?"

"When you married my mother, Cousin Peter," said Oliver, "I thought that I must keep my hands off you. But the more I think of it, the more I feel that an investigation of what happened to that money might be a very good thing."

Mr. Sydham made a gesture of bewilderment. "If I had the fortune you speak of," said he, "would I not be back in the East, enjoying it?"

"Unless," said Oliver, "you decided to send my mother back there out of harm's way, while you stayed here and tried to make that money grow and multiply? That's rather logical, isn't it? You knew that this country produced that quarter of a million, and perhaps you thought that you could stay on here and invest it properly."

"Oliver, Oliver," sighed the older man, "is there no faith in you?"

"None," said that cold young man. "And I have heard, besides, of various investments you have made in cattle and in a fur-trading company."

Mr. Sydham began to perspire freely. "My own capital!" he exclaimed. "It had nothing to do with your own money, my dear boy. I have showed you the accounts by which I very foolishly made many mistakes and finally lost all of your money." He added hastily: "Not that I ever intended to cut you adrift, Oliver. No, no! I have always intended to make some sort of a provision for you. But, as a matter of fact, you have been so very high-headed that I could not get you to listen to reason, in these respects or so much as take a penny of what I should very gladly have given."

"There, you see, is the rub," said Oliver. "I need money, of course, but I don't want charity even from Cousin Peter. But as for those accounts—why, accounts are simply figures written on a sheet of paper, and any one with a pen and a bit of imagination could construct them, eh?"

"Heavens, Oliver, would you accuse me of stealing from you?"

"You're a clever fellow, Cousin Peter," said Oliver. "However, I've made up my mind that when I get a chance I'll have to start an investigation of that old affair. I give you warning now—so that you'll have a chance to get your accounts in even better shape."

"Oliver, Oliver, what will your mother think and say?"

"She is a trump card, I admit; and she is in your hands," said Oliver grimly. "But we'll have to see how the game is played. Good-by, Cousin Peter!" And he turned his horse away.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FACE AT THE WINDOW.

EVERY man with any intellectual kingdom likes a bit of leisure, now and then, to explore for undiscovered country, or to wander again through twice-traveled regions; and it was so with the colonel who, unless he was on active service, usually managed a quiet evening with a book and an occasional sip of whisky and water. He had those comforts now; and, with his heels hanging on the edge of an extra chair, and a fire in the open hearth banishing

the evening chill, he looked now and again, lazily, through the open window across the room, to the haze of blue beyond.

He knew that that haze represented the night sky, infinitely distant; but, to the eye, it seemed in touching distance of the hand. And it reminded the colonel of other things which seemed close and were not—such as a higher grade, for instance. He would have traded all of those stars in the heavens for just a small one of golden threads to sew onto his collar; but he knew that to become a brigadier needs great luck or a great war—plus brains.

So he banished his own problems, and returned to his book at the very moment that the tender blue of the night sky beyond the window framed a looming bulk of head and shoulders. Like a panther, the stranger slid through the window. One foot was already on the floor when the colonel looked up into the face of Oliver Tay and the steady muzzle of his revolver.

He started to rise, but thought better of it and leaned back into his chair, while his eyes flashed to the two doors of the chamber through which help could come. Indeed, footsteps were constantly going up and down the corridor, and the orderly was surely due to make his report before many moments. That comfort was instantly removed.

Mr. Tay, without a word, turned to secure those doors one after the other. I say that he "turned," and that is the only word. Only from the very tail of his eye did he keep the colonel under observation, and Randolf Chisholm was terribly tempted to reach for the pistol on the chair beside him. But he resisted that temptation; for something in the very negligence of the manner in which that other gun was held made the soldier feel that the hand of Oliver Tay was as sure as death itself. So he made no move while the key was turned in the lock of each door. Almost instantly there was a gentle rap.

Oliver Tay motioned across his shoulder. "You can't be bothered," he murmured softly.

"Busy," called the colonel in echo. "Can't be bothered with the report now."

"Very good, sir," said the faint voice of good discipline which does not recognize in this world such a thing as disappointment. And martial heels tapped rhythmically away down the hall.

"You have four men that I want," said Oliver Tay, "the three Mexicans and the Comanche. I'll have them here. Quickly, if you please!"

"You'll have me order the four of them here and turn them over to you?" said the colonel gently.

"Yes."

"By what authority, Tay?"

"By an authority with six voices," said Oliver say. And he twitched the muzzle of the revolver upward as he rested on the arm of an easy chair.

"That," said Randolf Chisholm, "would be treason!"

"Treason," said Oliver Tay, "is a very strong word; but death is a stronger one."

"Do you mean that you would shoot me down like a dog?"

"I think that you have a right to that name," said Oliver Tay. "Yes, colonel, I would shoot you down like a dog. So send for them at once. I am in a hurry, as you may guess."

The colonel leaned a little forward in his chair. "Do you know that the Chisholms have served in the army of our country for three generations?" he asked.

"I trust that the service will not end to-night," said Oliver Tay coldly.

"Perhaps," said Randolf Chisholm. "But not because of cowardice, Tay; I shall not send for the men."

Oliver Tay looked at the other with new ideas, as though he were seeing in him a veritable continent of unexpectedness. "Do you think that I have been bluffing?" he asked.

"I do not care to think about you," said Chisholm.

"Is that final?"

"Perfectly final," said the soldier.

"I am sorry," said Oliver; "but you are about to die. You have hounded me like a dog. You have seized four men over whom you had no authority. Chisholm, are you ready?"

The colonel sneered and set his fine, fighting jaw.

The revolver rose and steadied, and the terrible eye of Oliver Tay looked straight down the barrel and into the heart of his victim. "Have you any last message, Chisholm?"

"Not to be delivered by you," said the colonel. Little beads of perspiration had gathered on his forehead; and he leaned a trifle forward in his chair, as though to meet the tearing shock of the bullet.

Suddenly the gun fell to the hip of Tay. "I never knew before that a scoundrel could also be a brave man," said Oliver Tay. "Adios, colonel. I give you this last piece of advice. When you come hunting for me—don't ride at the head of your men." He stepped back to the window, slipped gracefully and smoothly through it and was suddenly gone.

The colonel stared after him for a heart-breaking half of a second. He felt that he had been so close to death that he still could hardly warrant his life as being sound and safe. Beyond that window, he knew, the roof of the barracks commenced; and therefore he did not attempt to see where Tay had gone. Instead, he rushed for the doors of his room, shouting as he went. The key had barely turned, and he had flung the door open when he saw the orderly and two barracks servants running down the hall. He met them with a blasting shout: "Oliver Tay is in the fort. He still hasn't had time to leave, perhaps. Spread the word! Call Captain Dickson! Turn out the guard!"

And, as they sped away like frightened rabbits to do his business, he himself rushed after to lead in the hunt.

In the meantime, Oliver Tay had remained crouched outside the window of the colonel's room; and, the moment that he saw the room empty, he slipped back through the window. He was standing beside it when he heard three guns fired in rapid succession and, at the same time, a rapid fire of orders called and repeated, and the rush of men getting hastily into line. It pleased him immensely, to be able to stand here and watch by the starlight the search for himself. He found the colonel's box of cigars—fine, long, black ones; and he lighted one and began to smoke it carefully, with a due enjoyment. He puffed that blue-brown smoke through the window and saw the gathered soldiers disperse in groups—some on rattling horses, and some on foot. And yonder he could distinguish the very tones of Chisholm's clarion voice.

It would not take them long to make sure that he was not within the walls of the fort, he felt; and therefore he waited while the cigar burned shorter. He waited, and picking up pen and paper, he wrote:

DEAR CHISHOLM: Courage is a splendid attribute, especially in a soldier. I could not help coming back to let you know that there is something in you which I admire.

OLIVER TAY.

He left the paper, picked a few more cigars from the box, and then glanced out the window again. It seemed to him that the uproar was rapidly leaving the fort and passing away through the town, though there was plenty of bustle within the stockade, still. Now he issued from the window again and

ran in his stocking feet across the roof of the long barracks. He knew what section was given over to the use of the confinement quarters, and he made straight for that portion of the building.

He dropped flat, his head projecting over the eaves so that he could look down into the arcaded passage which passed before the cells. Of the two guards, one had been called away to join the hunt, or else he was not at his post. The second man wandered up and down with his thoughts far more on the other events of the night than on the prisoners whose barred doors were behind him. Now a sudden crackling of musketry made him run a pace or two into the open parade ground and look wildly about him.

That instant Oliver Tay sprang from gathered feet and hands like a beast of prey, and all the weight of his body struck the guard. The luckless soldier collapsed and lay in a jumbled heap to be picked up by the back of the coat and carried by Oliver back into the shadows. There his hands were tied, and a section ripped from his own shirt was fixed in his mouth. The guard's keys were taken from his pocket; and now, sitting up in the darkness, the bound and gagged man watched the figure of the giant go down the line of doors.

"Carpio!" called Oliver softly.

And a voice just as guarded answered: "Here, brother!"

One key after another gritted in the lock. Then it opened, and suddenly three men flooded into the passage.

That bound and gagged guard knew Spanish; and he heard the rescuer say, "Where is Yellow Wolf?"

"In this next room. Let him stay there, or do you want to let him——"

"He comes with us."

Another moment, and the next door was ajar; and Oliver called, "Yellow Wolf!"

The tall Indian stepped to the entrance. "I am ready," said the Comanche in his broken Spanish. And he straightened and stiffened a little, as a good warrior should when his death day has come.

But Oliver Tay was saying: "Here is a knife. It's the only weapon we can spare, now. Keep close with us, Yellow Wolf; and no harm will come to you, unless we all go down. Carpio, the stable is yonder." And he headed the fugitives in that direction.

CHAPTER XIV.

BOUGHT AND PAID FOR.

THEY crossed the parade ground, running at full speed. But though Oliver Tay was proud of his sprinting powers, he found Yellow Wolf running lightly and easily at his side. And with Yellow Wolf beside him they darted around the corner of the stable and came straight into a jumble of seven troopers in the very act of swinging into the saddle. Straight at the leader went Yellow Wolf with a yell of demonic fury. That wolf-cry alone would have done the business of the trooper. The flash of the knife quite finished him. He forgot all about the pistols in his holsters and the saber at his side and saved himself from the knife thrust by toppling backward on the ground. Yellow Wolf, leaping into the saddle, whirled the horse about, and charged into the center of the little knot of troopers and horses.

But there was no resistance. They had started out as a belated group of searchers after skulking fugitives. They had not keyed up their nerves to meet the attack of five desperate fighting men. Two or three guns went off, and the bullets whistled aimlessly into the air while the refugees seized the horses and mounted.

"Straight through the main gate and down the street," cried Oliver. "That's

the last place that they'll look for us." And off they flew like five arrows from one string.

That gate was guarded night and day, as a matter of course—but guarded against danger from the outside not from within. And, as they rushed through, there was only one wailing voice that cried after them: "Hey, what the devil? Guard! Guard!" And a bullet hissed past their heads.

They paid no heed to that. They had put the fort behind them; and the only danger was what lay before, and that made peril enough. For Siddon Flat was now alive with hunters. Nearly every soldier had been sent out from the fort, some in squads on foot, and some on their horses. The foot men hunted through the houses, and the riders scoured the streets; but only one body of men appeared before the fugitives, and this was a group of a dozen troopers led by the colonel in person.

Even these were taken at a tremendous advantage. Oliver, urging his horse on with heels and the quirt which he had found at the saddlebow, saw a stream of cavalry issuing from a byway; and in the front of the men he recognized the erect form of Randolf Chisholm. But Oliver and his four companions were that instant upon them and through them, without firing a single shot; and then, as Chisholm discharged his pistol and shouted to his men, the troopers darted off in the pursuit.

A stern chase is ever a long one. It is partly because the fastest horse may break his heart in the first wild effort to overtake the fugitives in the first burst, and partly because the keenest hunter has not the same desperate energy as the hunted. There were some fine horses in that troop of the colonel's men; and Chisholm himself was soon in the front, overtaking the five riders with every stroke of the long legs of his Kentucky gelding.

But one man cannot ride down five and expect to beat them in hand-to-hand conflict. The colonel was sharply reminded of this when Antonio Morales, turning in the saddle, marked the distance by which the colonel led his men; and then unslinging the cavalry carbine, which he found in the case beneath his leg, he tried a snap shot. If he had had his own rifle, it would have been Chisholm's last moment on this earth; but, even from the strange gun, he sent a bullet hissing so close to the colonel's head that that courageous warrior drew rein a little. His cavalrymen came up with him, but riding at their pace they could only gain inch by inch or not at all upon the fugitives.

They were out in the hills now, when little Capiño, with two fingers between his lips, sent a long whistle and then another screeching through the night air. And then two guns were fired.

"Are they sending signals to friends ahead?" asked the colonel suspiciously of the sergeant who kept beside him.

The sergeant shrugged his shoulders. This whole affair was so confused and so jumbled that he could not make head or tail of it. They had come out to hunt one man. Instead, they found that the one man had pierced through the guards at the fort and had liberated prisoners to join; and so the sergeant said: "Goodness knows what'll come of it, sir. Anything is possible, it looks like."

He had no sooner said it, than the colonel and all of the rest saw a dozen shadowy horsemen pour out from the mouth of a boulder-choked ravine, and, with them, the fugitives turned tail and fronted the soldiers, while a long-range rifle fire sent bullets spatting upon the stones around them.

The colonel called for a halt at once and filed his men off into the shelter

of a rock mass as large as a house. There had been enough guns fired to serve as signals to the town, and already he could distinguish the beating of hoofs as riders hurried toward the sound of the guns. But until they came up, Chisholm had no intention of letting his men be butchered by the superior numbers of fellows who could shoot as cleverly as that same renegade who had recently put a bullet within an inch of his cheek.

Far in front of them, the men of Venales were swinging off up the rocky cañon and disappearing into the deeper shadows of the valley. And never was there a more joyous crew, for they felt that they were taking with them a richer prize than any they had seized in many a month.

Yellow Wolf, marking all this with wonder, drew back his horse beside Carpio Vega. The latter had regarded the Comanche for a long time with interest.

"Look, Yellow Wolf," said that stately gun-fighter. "Yonder is an open way for you. No one is guarding you now. And why do you hesitate? Two seconds of heels and whip, and you are a free Indian once more."

At this, Yellow Wolf tilted back his head a little, so that the big cords of his neck thrust out, and the draggled feathers in his hair drooped, as he stared up to the stars of the sky. He seemed to find among them a means of explaining himself to his companion.

"I am not a child," said he; "and I am not unknown to the Comanches. The Apaches, also, know me a little," he added, with a grim note in his voice. "And when a man is sure that his tribe will not forget him, and when he has scalps at his belt or on the head of his spear, then it is time for him to think of dying well. No man dies well while he still owes a debt. I could have been left in that dark little room to die like a mangy wolf, prowling up and down before the iron bars. But the great chief came and spoke, and the door sprang open. I stood in the entrance, prepared to feel the knife thrust into my heart. But the great chief put the knife in my hand and said, 'Come with us. You will be safe.' Now, when the heart of a man has been bought and has been paid for, will an honest Comanche refuse to give what is no longer his?"

To this, Carpio Vega listened with the keenest attention. Then he nodded, and he said, adopting his language to the style of the Indian: "This is as true as the flight of a hawk is straight when it sees food."

Said Yellow Wolf, after a moment: "I was afraid that even such a man as the great chief did not have followers among the white men. But I see that he has his friends, even if they are not of his own tribe."

"I'll tell you this," said Vega. "Every man with a clear head and steady nerves, and a little grit belongs to the same tribe as Oliver Tay. And that, Yellow Wolf, was why he did not cut your throat. It was because he knew that you are a man like himself. You suspect that he saved you from the prison for the sake of butchering you later. But you are wrong. You are safer in his hands than in your own tepee in your own village."

So they rode on through the night. And now the darkness grew visible, like rolling smoke; and the vast mountains were seen rushing up from the earth toward the heart of the sky. Then granite slopes began to glisten with the light of the dawn. A dim clamoring below could be seen now, through a thousand feet of blue shadow, to be a little river, splintered to white against the rocks in its course.

Said Roderigo Venales to Oliver: "Do you remember, Oliver, when we climbed the rope ladder and turning our heads all that we could see beneath us was the line of the climbing slaves

with the ore baskets at their backs? It is better to turn and look down on this, eh?"

"It makes the backs of my legs ache," confessed Oliver, with a smile. "And there is the sun."

There was not heart in that column so brutal and calloused that it felt no awe when the sun rose from a well of gold and orange flames and went towering up the sky, touching faces and hands with an instant warmth.

Little Capiño was the first to turn from that sight. He stopped his horse on the dizzy edge of a pinnacle of rock along the trail and pointed down. The others followed suit; and Oliver, seeing a long troop of riders winding up the valley beside the white waters, put his glass to his eye and examined the men more closely.

"I should have known it," said he. "I should have known that whatever was trouble for me must be game for him."

"For whom?" asked Venales, scowling.

"That fellow," said Oliver, "who rides beside the colonel at the head of the troopers, down yonder. There are other people who wish me no luck, I suppose; but there is only one who would be actually happy if I were to fall off a cliff. And now that I see he actually has a hand in the business of hunting me, Venales, I tell you that I would give my right hand to charity, if I could have my left hand in his throat. It's Peter Sydham."

CHAPTER XV.

YELLOW WOLF PAYS A DEBT.

THE troopers were traveling abreast of them—but a thousand feet lower down; and that thousand feet meant weary miles of traveling before they could come to grips with the fugitives. As for that, Venales did not worry. He had his men not on picture horses but on seasoned bronchos capable of traveling through these difficult mountains almost as easily as though they had been on a plain. And so they wound along on their trail until the chief decided on a breakfast halt, and accordingly a brief pause was made.

It was then that Yellow Wolf was missed. No one could remember having seen him leave the line of march. Little Capiño, at that, showed his teeth in a grin.

"That's a true Indian!" he said. "They can make themselves disappear like something in a fairy story. You'll never see Yellow Wolf again. What nonsense were you telling me about that good Comanche, Vega?"

Carpio Vega hung his head, ashamed, and could not answer. They breakfasted. They rode on. Far ahead of them, and high, high on a rock against the blue of the heavens, they saw a magnificent mountain sheep with the sun flashing on his coiled horns. A long shot, perhaps an impossible one, it seemed, and therefore the call was instantly, "Morales! Antonio Morales! Now for your rifle!"

"You remember me now," said Morales with pretended sourness, though in reality he was as pleased as a child with a toy. "You remember me now that you want fresh meat. You that have not more than one eye to divide among you! However, there is some one else here that can do this business as well as I." And he handed the rifle which had been proferred to him to Oliver Tay.

Every day of his life, revolver and rifle had been sedulously practiced by Oliver, in the recent months. And yet, under the critical searching of these many eyes, he changed color a little; and he had to set his teeth hard to bring back some of his courage. He gave a single glance to the gun, weighed it for half a second in his hand; and then, shaking back his flood of golden

hair, he placed the butt in the hollow of his shoulder.

"In a long shot," his teacher, Morales, had told him a year before, "sight above and below, and then split the difference, leaning for the wind. And shoot when you have to."

So Oliver waited until his nerves had gathered a sort of explosive force. Then he pressed the trigger. So great was the distance that there seemed an appreciable instant after the spurt of smoke before the mountain sheep on the pinnacle reared like a horse, and then toppled down from the height.

There was not much of the shape of the sheep left to it by the time it had finished falling into the narrow level of the trail. But it meant meat for the entire crew; and a few cunning hands and sharp knives instantly divided it into portions, while the rest of the horsemen rode on.

"Was there such hunting in Loomis Valley?" asked Venales.

"Hush!" smiled Oliver. "Loomis Valley is a place that I have heard of too often. I wish to forget it. Gregorio!"

"Yes, Don Oliver."

"That is a magnificent horse you are riding."

It was a glorious black, beautiful as a panther, and with a panther's marking almost invisible in the hide.

"It is a fine animal," said Gregorio. "Shall I tell you how I happened to catch him?"

"You have told it a thousand times," said Venales. "Why should we hear it again when——"

"I wish to hear it, Gregorio," said Oliver gently.

The outlaw flashed an ugly glance at his commander. "I shall tell you, then," he said to Oliver. "The others need not listen—may they all be confounded for throat-cutting thieves! Only honest men should hear about honest horses. But I'll tell you then, Don Oliver, that I went into a town in the Sierra Madre, no matter where, to look for something to do; and, while I lay behind a knot of brush, I saw a caballero ride by on this horse.

"The instant I saw him, I knew that he was mounted by the wrong man, and I saw another in the saddle. I saw, also, that this was the matter on which I was sent to this village. I jumped up and sent a bullet past his nose. And, after he had stopped, I took the horse and rode away; because you see, señor, that I could not allow such a fine horse to have a coward in the saddle. I did not like the saddle, either; and so I waited for a chance to get this one with the silver work, which is almost worthy of him. Ever since that time I have been waiting to find the man who is really worthy to sit on his back in this same saddle. And at last, Don Oliver, I have found him. He is yours." He jumped from the stirrups as he spoke; and, with a bow, he placed the reins in the hand of Oliver Tay.

"What, Gregorio!" exclaimed Oliver. "Do you think that I could rob you of such a——"

"It makes no difference, really, on what I ride," said Gregorio, half bitterly and half smiling. "I can rob from one beast's back as well as from another. But the black was intended for you. He will never fail you, night or day. He will answer a feather's weight on the reins. He will lift his ears whether you curse him or praise him. And he will grow fat eating thistles and run a hundred miles a day even under your weight. Take him and thank the mare that foaled him, not Gregorio!"

So Oliver, seeing that the man was in earnest, accepted that princely gift, and suddenly found his weighty body carried as though on the back of the wind.

As for Gregorio, it was plain that

he had made himself an important member of the gang by that stroke of policy and generosity combined.

"I thought that he was no better than a hired man," whispered Venales to Vega; "but you see that he has a heart. This will help to tie Oliver to us. That Gregorio is a jewel of a man."

And Gregorio himself, as he had promised, seemed as content and as much at home on the back of Oliver's old horse as he had been on the black stallion.

They made a long march that day, and sighted the troopers no more. So they came out on a little plateau and camped there to eat the mutton which Oliver's trigger finger had presented to them.

The moon rose and lifted the many ridges of the range into misty view, when the patrol was heard calling a challenge; and a moment later there was a shout of recognition. Presently they saw two riders and a man on foot coming rapidly toward the fire. One rider was the patrol. And when they came closer every one could recognize the half-naked body of the other rider as that of Yellow Wolf. By a rawhide lariat he led a prisoner stumbling behind him, a weary, down-headed, dusty, footsore fellow whose clothes were torn to rags, he had stumbled and fallen so often on the terrible trail over which he had been passing that day.

They came closer to the fire. Yellow Wolf, dismounting, took the lariat and placed it in the hands of Oliver Tay. And then, for the first time, Oliver recognized the prisoner, for it was none other than Peter Sydham. Peter Sydham with a noose around his neck! Peter Sydham, sick with fatigue and with terror and with despair, who now fell at the knees of Oliver and groaned:

"Oliver, Oliver, keep the red devil from murdering me! I have been walking half the day not an inch from death. I have had his knife at my throat a dozen times. He has taken me here to rip off my scalp and kill me. But you, Oliver, dear lad, you'll save me?"

"Stand up!" said Oliver.

Mr. Sydham rose to his feet. He cast a wavering glance around him at the circle of watching, silent faces, as one in the hope of finding pity as a beggar hopes to find a crust of bread, however wretchedly small. But there was no token of softness. Their eyes turned curiously but calmly from Oliver to the prisoner, and it dawned upon Mr. Sydham that these fellows looked to Oliver Tay with the perfect confidence of men who felt he could do no wrong. And it seemed to Peter Sydham that he had never before seen formidable men so utterly in the hand of another as these were. In Oliver, therefore, was all his trust.

"Oliver, dear boy——" began Sydham again.

"Be quiet a moment," said Oliver Tay. And he turned to Yellow Wolf. "Brother," said he, "this morning I saw this man in the valley and was willing to give my right hand to have him. How did you take him?"

Yellow Wolf allowed the faintest trace of a smile to appear upon his features. "They went like fat cattle," said Yellow Wolf, "Their eyes were filled with dust when they looked down, and with the brightness of the sun when they looked up. They went slowly. Their horses melted with sweat. And the men turned red and gasped in the heat. Three Comanche boys could have herded them into the river."

His nostrils quivered fiercely for an instant; and in his eyes there appeared a spark of fire, as though he still tasted in afterthought the plentiful crop of scalps which might have been reaped. "However," said Yellow Wolf, "I followed them. I watched their trail and their dust and heard their talk, and one

after another strayed for a little. And I let them go." He took a deep breath. Surely the patience of the Indian in his man hunt had been sorely tried on this day! He said at last: "Then this fat steer who kept with the bull all day" —such was his definition of the young colonel—"stopped to drink at a little stream; and, as the others rode past him, he stayed a moment kneeling by the water and bathing his face. I waited until he was done, and then I touched him on the shoulder." Another smile of savage delight crossed his face. His story was ended.

CHAPTER XVI.

COUSIN PETER

THE style of Indian talk was well known to Oliver. He said now, briefly: "I understand now why the Apaches run like sheep when they hear the Comanche war cry. It was well done, brother. Look! Here is a rifle which has been charmed by the greatest of all hunters, Antonio Morales. He has given it to me, and now I give it to you. It will not miss when the fight is hottest."

Yellow Wolf, trembling with pleasure, perhaps more for the compliment than for the value of the gift, took it with both hands and stepped back with a shining face.

And Oliver raised his head a little so that the golden hair fell back again. "Now, Cousin Peter," said he, "I have heard the entire story."

"Oliver, Oliver," said the other, attempting playfulness as he shook his finger at the big man. "Did I see you rewarding that rascal for the trick that he played me? However, I understand. You have had hard feelings about me, Oliver. Erroneously, to be sure, but you could not keep from sending that red tiger to play a joke on me! Rather a practical joke, but I forgive you, Oliver, with all my heart! I am really glad to see your clan, Oliver. Astonishing lot, on my honor! But now for a touch of brandy before my knees shake away under me. I'm so tired—dragged along through the dirt and over the rocks—my neck raw with the cutting edges of that infernal lariat, by heavens, Oliver, and all the while——"

Oliver smiled. And there was something in that smile that silenced the other utterly. He bit his lip and looked again to make sure that he was right; and, in fact, the eyes of Oliver Tay were just as cold as chilled iron.

"I don't suppose that I need to point out," said Oliver, "exactly how happy Yellow Wolf would be if I told him that I was through with you, and that he could do anything he pleased with you."

"Merciful Heaven!" breathed Mr. Sydham. "Oliver, your mother——"

"There is mercy in God. Look for it in Him but not in me," said Oliver, "except under conditions."

He paused, and Sydham clamored trembling, "Whatever you wish, Oliver, dear boy! Whatever you wish! I am in your hands entirely!"

"We'll have the whole truth, then," said Oliver Tay. "We'll begin with the money and continue with that point. But in the first place I'll test your power to tell the truth by asking you one thing to begin with. Did you or did you not influence the colonel to treat me more like a dog than like a man?"

Mr. Sydham's eyes started from their sockets. With all his heart he wished to dodge the truth; and yet he feared that, if he lied, he would be turned over instantly to the grim red man who was now handling the rifle with such significant fondness in the light of the fire. "Heaven forgive me, Oliver. We all have our sins. And I am no better than the rest. But the

fact is, I was afraid that you might be dangerous; and the colonel—in short, I advised him to be just a little watchful."

"That's enough," said Oliver, controlling his voice. "I can guess at the rest. And now, the matter of the money. The quarter of a million, Cousin Peter!"

"Oliver, I swear on my knees that only place me safe again in reach of Siddon Flat, and you shall have every penny restored to you."

"Ah, you did not waste it all, then?"

"Will you believe me, boy?" pleaded the miserable Sydham. "I had your interests at heart all the while. But such a vast sum in the hands of a mere lad! I had the handling of it at first, you know, when we all grieved to believe that you were dead. And, while I was handling it, all of the investments turned out almost ridiculously well. I discovered that I had a sort of genius for finding out the good spots to place that money; and from farms to fur trading, whatever I backed panned out wonderfully.

"And then you appeared, Oliver; and I feared that if this big business were turned over to you, being young, you might dissipate it—all of the work of Cousin Tay, and my own work, also. And therefore, for a little while, I thought it would be better to let you carve your own way until the wild oats—forgive me if I call them that, dear Oliver—were completely sown, and then to make you a wonderful gift of—all of your property back and immensely increased!"

"Why, Cousin Peter, would you have done all of this for me?"

"Is not your mother's child mine, in a way? Who should I work for, except for you?"

"Good!" said Oliver Tay. "And now we'll have this little story all written down in black and white. And you'll mention the amounts of the investments, and the companies they have been placed with, and how much they have increased; and you'll be very specific, cousin. And if you should make an error, though it might be no more than the slip of a pen, I shall let Yellow Wolf do the correcting. But if you do all of this—I shall set you free."

"Do I have your signed promise of that?" asked Cousin Peter, white with rage and grief at this sudden turn of events.

"My word is better than my bond," said Oliver. "Now sit down and write."

So Peter Sydham had paper and pen furnished him by Venales, who kept such commodities always in a pocket of his saddle in case of odd emergencies somewhat of this very nature.

Carpio Vega drew Oliver to the side. "You will be able to go back to riches, then, Oliver," said he. "And just when we thought that we had gained you back to us, we'll lose you!"

"Do you think that?" smiled Oliver. "Tell me first how I shall be able to return? I think that this confession will insure my property to me. But when I go back to claim it, what shall I do? I have done worse than murder."

"Worse than murder? Oliver, you have never murdered a man."

"No, thank goodness! But in the eyes of my country, I have broken open jails, insulted the dignity of the army and therefore the flag which flies behind it. And now I've fled away from justice; and I've been seen resorting with armed bandits, Vega. So tell me what would happen when I tried to return?"

Carpio Vega bowed his head. "Shall I tell you honestly?"

"Yes," said Oliver.

"They would put you in prison for half your life or else a mob would hang you to a tree."

"Exactly," said Oliver; and his smile was steadier than ever. "But the truth is, Carpio, that I think I may be happier living a free short life as a border bandit in the mountains with you, than in cities living a long life where all men are more or less slaves. There—he's finished. I want you and Venales to be witnesses."

"And the girl?" said Vega, suddenly.

"What one man misses another man takes," said Oliver; and he stepped grimly forward toward Peter Sydham.

———

Editor's note:

So ends the second novel about Oliver Tay. He has won his fortune back, but Marian Barge is lost to him. He has again joined his outlaw friends and found a wild, happy freedom, but will he be content with this?

In the next issue of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE appears the third novel about Oliver Tay, The Border Bandit.

WESTERN STATE FLOWERS

The Sego Lily—Utah

WITH reason has Utah elected as its floral representative that lovely member of the tulip family, the sego lily. In 1911 the legislature honored this delicate blossom that meant so much to the first Mormon settlers of the State.

When Brigham Young and his weary band of travel-worn followers pitched their tents in that rather dreary land, they found these fragile flowers in all their tender loveliness, a bit of sweetness to welcome them. Nor did the sego lily serve only to beautify a drab countryside. As the manna fed in the wilderness that other group of religious nomads, the Jews, so the roots of this frail-appearing plant nourished and sustained the Mormons. For this reason the plant has figured largely in the history of the Mormon Church in Utah, and so it has attained its present place of honor.

The sego is one of the Mariposa group—the word Mariposa being the Spanish term for butterfly. The title is well given. A flower about two inches across, the sego lily has white petals, daintily tinted with yellowish green, lavender, or any one of a dozen other exquisite pastel shades. One naturalist claims to have found in a bed of these graceful blooms fourteen distinct markings. The blossoms, agleam in the sun in all the glory of their colorful patternings, much resembled a bevy of gorgeous butterflies with wings outspread for flight.

The relatives of the sego lily are many. It claims kinship with a family that ranges from the malodorous carrion flower to the fragrant lily-of-the-valley; from the flamboyant butterfly tulip to the modest fairy bell; from the poisonous hog potato to the edible comass and soaplike amole. And the sego lily itself is one of the loveliest belles in the galaxy.

Jewels of the Valley

By Frank Richardson Pierce

Author of "Crooked Straight," etc.

NATIVES shunned the valley in which Wiley lived, because tribal legends and superstitions claimed there was an opening in the ground at the head of the valley from which steam often poured. At other times an invisible gas, though the natives knew nothing of gas, entered a man's lungs, causing him to sleep and act queerly as if something were wrong with his head. Once, according to tradition, flames had leaped high into the air, as high as the mountains surrounding the valley; and hot rocks had come down like hail, killing many people, burning the grass and leaving nothing but destruction. Thousands of salmon had died before they spawned, and this was proven by the light run of salmon every fourth year. All this the natives along the Alaskan peninsula and Aleutian Islands spoke of.

The white people merely laughed and said the natives were afraid to enter the valley because Wiley had "missed too many boats," which is the sourdough term for a man who is crazy.

For many years Wiley had prospected for gold. Men, following his footsteps, often struck it, but Wiley missed every strike worth while, though he was ahead of them at Circle, Nome, and many places not so well known.

Like most prospectors he trapped, and his fur kept him supplied with grub when the gold pan yielded nothing. After foxes on the peninsular he had found the tropical valley, so called because the ground never froze and vegetables could be raised the year around. Here he lived, working into the cold areas with his trap line where the fur was prime.

He was sinking a shaft for gold, because gold is where you find it—and

that is in most unusual places—when he struck something else. He showed it to a prospector who pronounced it something worthless undoubtedly thrown from the volcano and buried. But Wiley called it a diamond. Perhaps it was because fortune had eluded him so long that Wiley's belief became almost violent.

His face had grown purple; his eyes blazed, but his voice was hardly a whisper so great was his emotion. "It's a diamond I tell you!"

The prospector opened his mouth to argue, then thought better of it. He retreated.

"A diamond!" Wiley advanced, then suddenly seemed to totter. "It's got to be a diamond, I can't stand disappointment again. It's a diamond, isn't it?"

One had to humor the insane, the prospector remembered. "Yes, Wiley, now that I think of it, it probably is a diamond. You'd better stake your claim before the rush begins."

But no rush took place. For weeks no one entered the valley, and Wiley brought bucket after bucket of soil from his shaft, washing it in a sluice box as he would gold. Now and again he found the crystals, some very small, others larger—one was large, flawless and as colorless and limpid as pure water. He tried by crude methods to polish what he called his gems, but was unsuccessful.

There followed days when he was possessed with a terrible fear that some one would steal his gems. He sewed them cleverly into his clothing and then slept without undressing. Once he journeyed fifty miles to the nearest trading post and sent outside for books regarding diamonds and diamond mines. He tried to induce the storekeeper to exchange grub for some of the gems, but the man laughed nervously and said that he preferred prime fur as he had no connections with diamond buyers. Wiley paid him in prime furs and with his dog team set across the country at a furious speed, lest some one jump his claim while he was away. Diamonds are of more value than gold; hence men would take desperate chances to rob him.

He did not know that men regarded him as insane and had urged the United States marshal to send a posse to bring him in. "To protect himself and others," they said. "He's missed too many boats, and the first thing we know he'll get the idea all men are against him, and he'll kill somebody."

The marshal sent three men, and they arrived one evening. While one talked to him, the two slipped around and caught him from behind.

"Take it easy, old fellow," one of them said quietly, "we are officers. We are going to send you outside to rest up!"

In a flash Wiley understood. They were going to send him to an insane hospital. They thought he had missed too many boats, merely because he was confident he had found diamonds where no other man had found them. Diamonds had to be discovered some time.

For a moment he regarded the handcuffs on his wrists, then with a cry of fury he jerked his hands and twisted his wrists. Something snapped; it sounded like the snap of a bone, but it was the breaking of a link. He kicked one man in the stomach, knocked a second through the door, and broke the grip of the third as if the deputy were a child. Then he tied them up, threw their weapons into a vent from which came steam and boiling water, and sent them away lashed to their own sled.

"I've harmed no man," he screamed in their ears, "and I'll not harm a man as long as I am not bothered. Tell that to the marshal; tell it to the world!"

They were glad to escape with their lives. But the marshal was not the sort of man to quit. When an insane man lived in his district he must be taken

care of. Other and more important matters came up for attention during the months immediately following. Wiley's case was classified as unfinished business. He could wait, for few people lived in the district and all could be depended upon to leave the man strictly to himself. A trapper, coming out that spring with his winter's catch of fur, reported that he had crossed the valley and met Wiley.

"Crazy as ever," he announced, "so I agreed with everything he said. He's moved his cabin so that it covers the mouth of the shaft. To get timbers strong enough he had to haul them three miles with dogs, and mush upgrade at that. He thinks everybody is after his mine. He's got a lot of books on diamonds, and that is all he reads. Poor devil, he's had hard luck most of his life and you can't blame him much when he thinks he's struck it! What are you going to do about it?"

The marshal had listened attentively. "Is he well armed?"

"If you call three .30-30 rifles and four automatic pistols and plenty of ammunition well armed, Wiley's well armed. If you go after him, you'll have to use a machine gun, and shoot his shack to bits. If you rush it, he'll kill a lot of good men. I get his viewpoint; he's protecting his property. When the law steps in he thinks it's a frame-up."

"I'll have to use strategy," the marshal answered.

The marshal later called it a fortunate coincidence when a tourist steamer discharged several hundred people from the ends of the world. Each was looking for dog teams, polar bears, Eskimos —and finding scenery, citizens like themselves, and balmy weather.

It was logical that a diamond buyer, seeking relaxation, would sooner or later think of Alaska when hundreds engaged in as many different occupations thought of it each year. During the trip, to while away the time, he had mentioned the value of some of the world's greatest diamonds. The passengers talked, and a deputy marshal, returning from escorting a prisoner to McNeil's Island, looked up the diamond expert and related the story of Wiley.

"And," he concluded, "we've got to dig him out sooner or later!"

"Perhaps I can help you," the buyer suggested, "if as you say he has read everything pertaining to diamonds, he, doubtless, has heard of Mark Grauman!"

"You are Mark Grauman?"

"Yes, not well known to the world generally, but in diamond marts far from a stranger! Talk it over with your chief and if there is any way I can help you by talking to this poor fellow perhaps it will save trouble. To me at least it will prove a pleasant diversion and interesting."

"Have you a photograph and one of your business cards?" the deputy inquired. "That will help a lot. If he knows you are here, we can put up a cock-and-bull yarn about you coming from New York to buy diamonds from him. That should disarm him. If we can get him aboard the steamer, the rest will be easy. This ship goes out to a cannery this voyage; we pass within three miles of Wiley's valley. He's ten miles from the coast. When we stop at Valdez I'll go ashore and talk it over with the marshal and get his O. K. You are sure you want to go through with your part; that you can carry it out?"

Grauman, fat and soft, seemed wholly unfitted for the part.

"I shall expect you to protect me, of course, should he become violent. Otherwise I can carry out my rôle, for the buying of diamonds is my business!"

"You are not only rendering us a real service, Mr. Grauman, but if we can take Wiley without injuring him,

it is a service to him also. Perhaps with time and good care——"

"Let us hope so!"

Daylight was almost continual at this season of the year. From his window Wiley saw the figure of a lone man appear far below, a tiny dot making its way slowly toward the cabin. He came with confidence, and in the open, disarming to some extent Wiley's doubts. The miner watched him without smiling. No one had business in this valley but that affected him; good intentions must be proven. He would not take them for granted. The automatic pistol that the miner carried was cocked, the safety on. By a quick thumb movement it would be ready for action.

The man emerged from the opposite side of the stream, crossed and made his way up the trail. "Hello, Wiley!" he called, "got a letter for you. Fellow named Grauman on the tourist steamer sent it. Seems he's heard of you and wants very much to buy your diamonds!"

As he spoke the deputy saw suspicion fade from Wiley's face. In its place came a beautiful light—the light that comes only when a man has struggled long and far; then sees the goal for the first time.

"Grauman! Grauman! It means the world will know that I'm right; that I'm not a crazy man playing with pretty rocks—like they said I was. It means I can rest, eat grub that somebody else cooks; see shows, have a car and maybe —a family." And in the last word Wiley had expressed the basic reason for his grim struggle. He wanted a family, a real home.

The deputy was a grim man; he swallowed hard, and something came into his eyes for a fleeting moment. The other saw, noticed this, and again suspicion came with a rush. His eyes narrowed; he breathed hard, and his hand went to the butt of the .45 in the holster.

"It's a trick!" Wiley cried. "A trick! I might have known my luck wouldn't change this late in life." His voice grew tired but none the less firm. "I could kill you for it. When the deputies came before I wanted to kill in self-defense, but I didn't. Now I want to kill because of the hope you gave me then took away. Get out!"

The deputy summoned all of his nerve as he advanced a step. "Read it for yourself, Wiley, I don't care what you do. They merely sent me to you!"

Wiley's fingers trembled as he tore open the envelope. There was a photograph of Grauman. "Yes, that's Grauman," Wiley muttered, "I've seen it before!" He looked at it searchingly. "He's a shrewd man and drives a hard bargain, but they say he's square."

Then he read the accompanying note. It was brief and to the point. Grauman was playing his part perfectly.

Wiley smiled. "I'm sorry I doubted your word, but—it's been tough. And it seemed as if I didn't have a friend in the world! Just alone, with everybody shunning me or looking at me queerly. I'll be ready to start in five minutes!"

He returned to the cabin, and the deputy followed. He could have overpowered Wiley from behind, but he remembered the story of the handcuffs that wouldn't hold. He had no desire for a single-handed battle. He was a brave man, but he was not a fool!

The letter and Grauman's photograph had completely disarmed Wiley. He brought forth some of the crystals and showed them. "Only found a few, a couple of hundred I guess; then the dirt changed, and I found no more. But I have enough, and perhaps if I come back with machinery and search—I'm ready now!"

As they followed the creek back totoward tidewater, Wiley chattered like

a child. For months he had borne a heavy burden and it had been lifted by a man's photograph—a man who bought diamonds. He explained that he had read a lot about diamonds, and that perhaps the volcano had at some time created the tremendous pressure necessary for their formation. Perhaps when it burst forth, flaming, it had consumed many of the gems it had created.

The deputy said it was likely. He was dealing with an insane man, and it was best to humor the insane. Let them believe what their disordered minds created; they were happy in their belief. After all, the deputy thought, happiness was a state of mind, not a condition. If it were a condition, then everybody would be happy under the same conditions.

Waters lapped at the beach with a strange quiet. Bleak, storm-beaten rocks lifted their crags off shore, and behind them a mountain smoked.

Wiley drew a knife and, with its sharp point, slit portions of his clothing. Rough diamonds came forth. He placed them in a bag and waited. These hours on the beach seemed longer than the months in the valley. The deputy having eaten his fill of berries, ate a cold lunch and brewed some tea. Wiley drank a cup of tea, but he was not hungry. Shortly before midnight the steamer emerged from the twilight. She was a pretty thing, and her rails were lined with curious people for the news had leaked out some way. She came to a stop, drifted easily with the tide, and a boat was lowered.

The deputy assisted the miner over the bow, then climbed in himself. The movement was instinctive, for thus he handled prisoners. He kept them ahead of him, under his eyes. The officer spoke sharply, and the men began rowing toward the steamer.

For the part he was to play Grauman appeared quite cool. He paced the deck casually, but when the boat came alongside his interest increased. He rested his fat hands on the rail and peered down. It was easy to pick Wiley from the group. He was easily the most powerful man in the boat. He weighed close to two hundred, Grauman estimated, but he ran up the ladder with the agility of a cat. Grauman stepped forward.

"Mr. Wiley?"

"Yes. Are you Mr. Grauman!" Wiley extended his hand, and Grauman shook it warmly. It occurred to him here indeed was a hand capable of choking a man to death with small effort. "I've read about you!" Wiley added.

Grauman had heard many men in the trade say that. He responded conventionally. "Let's step right into my cabin!"

The deputy stood framed in the doorway as Grauman seated the miner. In the bathroom adjoining were four strong men and each carried handcuffs.

"Let's see your diamonds, Mr. Wiley. What tests have you personally made?"

"Every test I could make under the circumstances," Wiley answered. Then he explained, using phrases and words he had picked up from technical books. It occurred to the deputy that the insane are often thorough in their investigations. Wiley used the same words Grauman used. They spoke the same language.

Something clattered to the table; then there was silence. It had been agreed that when Grauman coughed, the men were to overpower the miner. That was the signal. Then Grauman was to step by the deputy in the doorway and remain on deck where it would be safe.

He studied Wiley's diamonds for several moments in silence, and to the waiting officers the delay was unbearable. Grauman was losing his nerve, afraid to give the signal.

Presently he coughed, and the door opened, but Grauman never moved.

The cough had been unintentional. He saw suspicion come into Wiley's eyes, then he smiled.

"Thanks, Mr. Marshal, for your assistance in locating Mr. Wiley," he said. "His story, his incredible story reached New York, and I was sent to investigate. I had been told it was as much as a man's life was worth to enter his little valley, but I was prepared to do so if need be, for a diamond buyer's business is to buy diamonds wherever they may be obtained!"

His hand fell on Wiley's shoulder. "And these crystals of yours, through some trick of nature, are diamonds."

LONG'S PEAK CLAIMS SIXTH VICTIM

LONG'S PEAK, in Colorado, has long held forth a challenge for the daring and courage of adventuresome mountain climbers From time to time, the history of this famous mountain is marred by tales of tragedy, when some rash mountain climber overreaches himself in his efforts to conquer its heights.

The latest to fall victim to the perils of Long's Peak was Forrest Ketring, a nineteen-year-old youth, a resident of Denver, who lost his life in climbing one of its ledges on July 23rd last. Ketring was making the climb in company with a more experienced mountaineer, Reuel James, and the latter was about ten feet below him on the stone face of the mountain, when the tragedy occurred. Ketring lost his hold on Broadway Ledge, a treacherous spot on the east face of the peak, and hurtled downward a distance of one thousand feet to his death on the jagged rocks near the snowbank fringing Chasm Lake. It is thought that death occurred after Ketring's body struck a projection of rock about thirty feet down from the Broadway Ledge.

The scaling of the eastern face of Long's Peak is considered a dangerous feat and should be attempted only by experienced mountain climbers assisted by expert guides. The regular path up the mountain by way of the Keyhole trail is not dangerous under normal summer conditions, according to a statement issued by Park Superintendent Toll after the tragedy, and probably a thousand persons, many of them women, have made the ascent by that route. The east peak has no regular trail, but must be climbed up a fairly passable route over the most percipitous side of the mountain.

The first victim of an attempt to scale Long's Peak, of whom there is record, was Miss Carrie J. Welton, a New England woman, who died of exposure and overexertion on the mountain side during the night of September 23, 1884, while trying to make the ascent. In 1925, the peak claimed two victims, Miss Agnes Vaille, of Denver, an experienced mountain climber, who had essayed the trip in mid-winter, accompanied by Walter Kiener, a Swiss Alpinist. Kiener suffered severe injuries from frostbite in his efforts to get help for the girl, and a member of the rescue party, Herbert Sortland, lost his life.

Another victim of the mountain was Gregory Aubuchon, an eighteen-year-old boy, who set out to make the climb in the latter part of July, 1921, and was found on September 16th, of the same year, at the base of the east face of the peak, by forest rangers who had located the body with the aid of their field glasses.

Still another to lose his life on the mountain, though in a different manner, was J. E. Kitts, of Greeley, Colorado, who was almost instantly killed by a lightning bolt as he stood on the summit of the peak, on August 1, 1922.

The Temple of the Sun

By Arthur Preston Hankins

Author of "Get Jimps," etc.

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters

ARCHÆOLOGIST and prospector, Sim Fannan finds golden plates of Aztec origin in mysterious ruin in the Southwest. Disabled by his own dynamiting operations, he is rescued by Kathleen Dancy, a talented girl who has brought her father West for his health.

Recovering from the explosion in San Francisco, Sim tells his fiancée, Eileen Calmar, of his discovery and where his map is hidden. Next day the map is stolen; Sim is convinced that it has been taken by George Arlie, his lifelong enemy and bitter rival—perhaps with the connivance of Eileen. Sick and disillusioned as he is, Sim returns to the desert only to find that Arlie has arrived before him, but has been hurt in an automobile accident.

To earn money for necessities, Kathleen has been playing the violin in a dance hall. But the proprietor and his bouncer, Patango Pete, have discovered that the gold Sim gave her to pay for taking care of him after his accident is gold that has been filed from solid metal—not placer gold. Believing Sim to be the bandit that stole a $70,000 bar of gold from a mine messenger, they suggest to Kathleen that she reform him and find where he has hidden his treasure.

CHAPTER XII

LOVE AND DEATH

IN the little cabin on Shanty Creek sat Kathleen Dancy, staring into space, her rounded chin cupped by a hand. Her father was asleep, breathing heavily. Two bright pink spots glowed on his cheek bones, and his face looked wan and thin. The nurse was sleeping on a couch in another room.

"The little rat!" the girl said to herself, hot with indignation. "I wonder if he thinks he pulled the wool over my eyes. But, of course, Patango Pete doesn't know that Sim told me, weeks ago, all about him. He doesn't even know that, according to Sim, Patango is a highwayman himself.

"I see the whole plot now. Ayers is in on it. I was hired to play at The Pioneer so they could keep tab on me and eventually get at Sim through me. What detestable criminals they all are! And to think that that batter-brained Pete should believe I was swallowing his impossible protestations of righteousness!"

That part of it was all right. But, when she thought of Sim and the mysterious source of his gold, coupled with his reticence in talking about it, and

when she remembered the sharp-edged particles of dust and the plausibility of Patango Pete's explanation of them, her eyes were flooded with bitter tears.

She had hours to herself, while John Dancy and the nurse slept on. It was time for her to cook something to eat; but she remained seated in the sick room, her eyes fixed unseeingly on the darkening desert.

Did she love Simeon Fannan? Her face felt hot as she revolved the question in her mind. But, straightforward, simple-hearted girl that she was, she finally answered the question boldly. She did love Simeon Fannan.

Then she must take Patango Pete's advice and "save him from himself." Pete needn't have taken the trouble to tell her that Sim was not all wrong, merely a good man who had been tempted too far. Kathleen didn't care whether he had fallen or not. She loved him; and she wanted him; and she would save him, even as Patango had advised.

The gold would go back to its owners, but Ed Ayers and the Oshanter Gang would not see one ounce of it. Sim himself would send it back. She would make him love her enough to do that. He did love her. His kiss had told her that—had told her glad, wildly beating heart that he was hers.

She must plan. She would have to keep Patango Pete thinking that she was falling in with his childish scheme while she thought up some way of bringing about the desired end. But no plan presented itself. Perhaps to-night if she saw Simeon again something would happen.

She stopped this line of thought, blushing furiously. Sim had not openly professed his love for her as yet. She could do nothing until—until that happened. Oh, what could she do, anyway? She was feverish to be about it, to get Sim out of the clutches of the Oshanter Gang as well as to bring him to himself. Now, it seemed, she could do nothing but wait — wait for she scarce knew what.

Once more Simeon Fannan was one of the number that composed the silent throng in The Pioneer Dance Hall while Madame Volga Van Norman played the violin. He was waiting for her in the rear of the building when she came from the left-hand door to take the dark trail for home. Patango Pete Oshanter, the duty-bound bouncer of the dive, issued from the other door as soon as Kathleen appeared. He grinned at Sim, made a motion toward his enormous hat, and immediately left them to themselves.

Kathleen laid her arm on Sim's, and they started down toward Shanty Creek without a word.

"The gang seemed to like your rendition of 'Pale Moon' to-night," Sim ventured finally. "I think they showed even more appreciation than they did last night."

"Yes, it's simpler," she replied, "and perhaps holds a greater emotional appeal than the more classical pieces."

They were silent after this until they had crossed the creek on the foot logs.

"I'm leaving again to-morrow morning," said Sim, as they reached the northern bank.

"For how long?"

"Perhaps more than a week."

"Are you going back to San Francisco again?"

"Not this time. This trip is a secret one, Kathleen. But to be frank with you, I'm going up to my claims to pan out more gold. I'm running short of ready cash."

Simeon had been careful to say "up to my claims," for he didn't know just what Kathleen might have told Ed Ayers, and he wished to continue the deception that the source of his treasure was in the mountains.

"How will you go?" asked the girl.

"Well, I was thinking about hiring

your two mules, since they're idle," he told her. "I could ride one and pack the other. But I have discarded that plan. I must make a sneak out of here. So I'll ride to Two Sisters on the stage and then on to the railroad town. There I'll take a train south and hire an automobile to circle me around to the desert at the lower end. I'll return straight up the desert to Shanty Camp, if I'm lucky in getting transportation that way."

For some time Kathleen Dancy remained silent. Here was her chance, it seemed, to let her companion know that she knew how he had acquired this gold; but she shrank from the task. If only he had backed up that kiss with a declaration of love, she might feel that it was her duty to broach the subject. But not once since then, though they had been alone together, had he displayed any feeling of affection. She bit her lip. How she longed for him to tell her that he loved her! It maddened her and shamed her to realize that she loved him so deeply, and that his kiss might be only the result of a passing fancy.

They spoke but little during the remainder of the walk to the ranch. At the barbed-wire gate which held the mules in check they stopped. For a little they stood there in the moonlight saying nothing, as bashful and self-restrained as two country lovers.

Then suddenly Simeon Fannan broke the silence. "Kathleen, will you marry me?"

It came so suddenly, so unexpectedly, and in such a matter-of-fact way that a little cry of surprise burst from Kathleen's lips.

"Why, Sim!" she stammered finally, all of the romance shocked out of her. "I—why do you want to marry me?"

"In San Francisco," Sim said in a calm tone, "I met with a very distressing experience. There's a girl up there that I have imagined I was in love with for several years, since my college days, in fact. But, since I've met you, I realize that I never really loved her. She's cold and hard and selfish; she's insincere and—and treacherous. I have every reason to believe that, since I've been here on the desert, she's turned me down for another man. Not only that, but she played me a dirty trick—to use the everyday expression. I'm engaged to her now, but I mean to write her a letter and ask her to release me from the pact. Then I want to marry you."

"Haven't you changed your mind rather abruptly concerning her?" asked Kathleen in tones that were decidedly cool.

"Perhaps I have," Sim agreed with her. "But I'm mighty glad that something occurred to show me that she doesn't love me and that I never really loved her. On the train coming down here, it was not Eileen that I thought about continually, but you. I found that I wasn't even angry at her, as I should have been. That was because I found it so easy to forget her and keep your picture in my mind. Will you marry me, Kathleen?"

For a long time the girl made no answer. It had come, the proposal for which she had been longing. But in what a way! This man did not sweep her into his arms and pour out his protestations of devotion. He had not even told her that he loved her. Something was all wrong about this. Her dreams were wrecked. It was as if he had asked her if he could use her mules for a week or so. She was deeply disappointed.

And was he offering her marriage in an effort to forget the other girl? Why should she be second choice to any one? He had come to her only after the unexpected discovery that the other girl preferred another man to him. Was he merely trying to spite this Eileen? Did he imagine that his life was incomplete without a woman, and that any good-looking, cultured girl would do, so long as his first choice had jilted him?

He was waiting patiently while these resentful thoughts passed through her mind. She felt indignant, hurt. Kathleen was by nature deeply romantic and emotional; such a businesslike proposal from the man she loved repulsed her.

"I think," she faltered finally, in a voice that trembled with her feelings, "that you'd better make sure about this other girl before you—before you——"

She could go no further.

"I'm entirely sure about her, you, and myself," said Sim quietly. "I think that I have loved you, Kathleen, since that night when I heard you playing your violin on the desert."

"Then—then why didn't you say so?" asked Kathleen in a weak, embarrassed tone.

Sim stared at her a moment in the moonlight. "By George!" he said finally, "I guess I did forget to mention that I love you. I'm all cut up over this business, Kathleen. It's hit me hard. It's not the loss of Eileen, but what she did to hurt me—and that in collusion with the man who has hated me since we were boys together. Somehow or other, I thought you knew that I loved you after that kiss last night. You—you didn't repulse me. I was led to believe—I hoped—Kathleen, I love you. I love you more than anything else on earth. Trust me; believe in me! I blundered to-night. Now I know how you must have felt. But——"

"Yes?" She was afire now, waiting, eager for something that still was missing.

And then it came, as suddenly as had come his request that she become his wife. It came in a single word:

"Kathleen!"

His tone was low; the name trembled on his lips. His arm went about her and he drew her close. His lips sought hers and found them.

"Kathleen! You love me! You must love me! I need you. I must and will have you."

She gave her lips to him in complete surrender. "Oh, yes, yes, yes!" she murmured. For fully a minute she clung to his arm, glad that she was alive, glad that she loved this man, dizzy with this great happiness that had come upon her.

Then swiftly Simeon Fannan broke the spell. "Enough for to-night!" he said. "I—there's something that I have sworn to do which I—I must think about more carefully. Somehow, since I know you love me, I don't seem to care for anything else in life. My enemy's triumph over me doesn't seem to matter now. But I must think. Good night. Good-by. I must get away from you and think."

He kissed her once again rapturously; then his arm left her shoulders, and he went away into the desert night.

At the door of the cabin the nurse met Kathleen, whose dark eyes were sparkling, whose bosom was heaving with a strange emotion, whose life had suddenly become something new and grand and wonderful.

"Miss Dancy," said the nurse, "I—I hardly know how to tell you. But——Well, he had another hemorrhage, the most severe of all; and—and it's all over. I'm sorry. I wish I could say something."

Her voice faded away to a meaningless mumble, while Kathleen stood and stared, her soul plucked from the heights of rapture down to the bitterness that walks with death.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PLOT THICKENS

IT was four o'clock in the morning when a heavily wrapped figure slipped along the single street of Shanty Camp to the flimsy structure that housed the office of the stage line. Shanty Camp was at last quiet, though the customary revel had lasted until the early-morning hours. But Kathleen knew that the first

stage left for Two Sisters at half-past four, and she saw a light in the office windows.

She found the door unlocked; so she entered to find two men huddled over a glowing stove, for the desert nights were cold.

"I want to go to Two Sisters on the first stage," she told them, as they looked up inquiringly.

"Why, it's Madame Van Norman, ain't it?" said one of the men. "Sure. She goes at four-thirty, lady. Is they anything wrong? You look white and stick."

"My father is dead," she answered simply. "I am going for Doctor Bayard."

Neither man had anything to say to this. They looked sympathetic and curious, but their tongues were frozen.

"No need for you to do that, Miss," one of them told her finally. "All you gotta do is send word by the driver. I wouldn't make the trip this time in the mornin', if I was you."

"I think I'd better go myself," said Kathleen, and sank into a chair.

She watched the door. Several times it opened to allow men to enter, but Simeon Fannan did not put in an appearance. She had thought that, with the long trip ahead of him, he might take the first stage leaving Shanty Camp. She wanted to see him again, to tell him what had happened, to let him know that she knew he was a bandit and that she loved him in spite of everything. Riding with him to Two Sisters, she thought she might be able to convince him that their happiness depended on his returning the stolen gold to the rightful owners. She didn't know what she might say, or whether or not she would have the courage to broach the subject; but, in the hour of her greatest trouble, she felt that she wanted him. Perhaps, even, he might manage to postpone his trip to the southern part of the desert because of her father's death.

But the minutes passed slowly, and he did not come. Ought she to wait for the next stage? Surely he would take that one. But she had no place to stay except in the office, and she was too nervous and wretched to remain inactive for such a length of time. Perhaps at Two Sisters, after she had seen the doctor, she would meet Sim as he changed stages for the railroad point.

A man thrust his head in at the door. "Ready in five minutes," he announced, and disappeared again.

Then Kathleen asked for a piece of paper and an envelope. Using her knee and a magazine for a desk, she wrote a note to Sim in case she might miss him at Two Sisters. She sealed the envelope and handed the note to the man who apparently was the manager of the concern.

"Do you know Mr. Fannan?" she asked him.

He shook his head.

Kathleen described him; and, when she mentioned the bandaged arm, the man nodded. "Yes, I've seen him about," he said.

"He'll be going to Two Sisters sometime to-day," she continued. "Will you please give him this when he comes in for his ticket?"

"Sure,"—and the note went into a pigeonhole of the manager's desk.

Again the head appeared at the door. "All aboard!"

And in a few minutes the machine was purring out of Shanty Camp, with the brooding eastern sky changing slowly to pink and gold.

Doctor Bayard's blood transfusion had been entirely successful. George Arlie had regained full consciousness and was resting and recuperating splendidly, with the life-reviving strength of Bottleneck Oshanter coursing through his veins.

The estimable Mr. Oshanter, however, was somewhat weak. But this

rugged elder brother of the subtle-minded Patango Pete would, within a few days, be entirely himself again.

In Doctor Bayard's simple little home at Two Sisters the two lay facing each other in narrow white beds in what the doctor called his hospital. The doctor was out on an early morning emergency call, and the nurse was busying herself in a remote part of the house. The two patients had conversed to some extent and had become quite well acquainted.

This morning, however, Bottleneck seemed abstracted and was not listening to what Arlie was saying. But at times he broke his abstraction to stare across at the other man in an odd meditative way.

Presently he spoke, interrupting the other in the middle of a sentence. "Say," he blurted out, "I wanta have a little talk with you about somethin' I heard you mention when you was outa your head yesterday."

Arlie gave a slight start and gazed in some apprehension at his companion. "What was that?" he asked. "I didn't know I'd been rambling."

"I'll state that you was ramblin', pardner. I listened to you for more'n an hour."

"For heaven's sake! What did I say?" Patently Arlie was worried about this little matter.

"Well, for one thing," Bottleneck proceeded cautiously, "you mentioned a fella they call Sim Fannan."

Arlie paled, but the bandages over his face did not reveal it. "Yes?" he said. "What on earth did I say about this Fannan?"

"Seems you know 'im pretty well," said the big Oshanter brother.

"Well, what if I do?"

Bottleneck gazed up at the white ceiling for some moments before offering a reply. Then he said slowly, "We might git together on a certain little matter you was spoutin' about in connection with this here Fannan boy."

"Please be more explicit," returned George Arlie. "I don't believe I know just what you're talking about."

"I believe you just do," Bottleneck retorted bluntly. "How 'bout that map you stole from 'im in San Francisco?"

And so, completely cornered, George evaded and parried until he had drawn from his fellow patient the gist of what he had said in his delirium.

It developed that he had had a great deal to say about a certain girl named Eileen Calmar, about a cave on the desert in which ancient treasures of scientific nature were hidden, and about his hatred of Simeon Fannan. But his careful probing failed to bring to light any mention of the golden plates. Which was natural enough, since George, being wealthy, had little interest in golden plates. As in the case of Simeon, the scientific importance of the great discovery on the desert was of more concern to Arlie than the mere monetary value of the secrets of the cave.

Finally asked Bottleneck: "D'you know where this bird gits his gold dust?"

This instantly put George upon his guard. "Gold dust?" he queried. "I don't understand."

"Maybe you do and maybe you don't," the big man answered, slowly shaking his enormous head. "Now I want you to understand that I don't give a whoop why you're out to git 'im, unless it's because o' this Eileen person you're both in love with. But I'd like to have you answer me this, s'long's we've progressed so far in this little matter: D'you know this Sim Fannan is a holdup man?"

George's eyes widened. "That's extremely interesting," he said evasively. His mind was busy at once. Sim had told him and Eileen about filing some of the plates to gold dust. He wondered—"Go on, please," he urged. I'm interested."

"I reckon you are. But I won't go

on unless it's likely you and me can come to an understandin'."

"Well?"

"You don't know anything about a certain big bar o' gold that was recently swiped from a bullion messenger down on the Mexican border?"

George shook his head, his mind working rapidly.

"Well, they was one swiped; and this bird swiped it. He's got her hid out somewheres, and when he needs a little jack he rambles out and files off what he wants from that chunk." And Bottleneck proceeded to explain the process of making gold filings resemble closely the product of the placer miner's pan.

"All that is certainly entertaining," said Arlie. "But wherein am I concerned?"

"You stole the map that shows where this yaller cake is cached," said Bottleneck.

"Oh, I see."

"Yes, I guess you do see, pardner. And you come down here on the desert to use that map in locatin' that chunk o' yaller solder. All this scientific stuff is the bunk. You was gonta put up a tale like that in order to git by down here, and you told it to yourself so much that you talked about it in your sleep. What're you admittin', Mr. Arlie?"

"Nothing whatsoever," George answered guardedly.

"Well, I'll put her this way, then: Now that you're knocked out and won't be able to look up this little nugget for some time to come, and now that I know your little secret, what're you gonta do?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," was Arlie's safe reply.

Again Bottleneck was silent, apparently concentrating deeply. "Friend," he expounded finally, "me and my little brother and some pals of ours have also been huntin' for the cache o' that bar o' gold for a considerable time. But this bird always managed to hide his trail and shake us. Now, since you and my outfit are engaged in the same lawful pursuit, why can't we git together concernin' this map?"

It was George's turn to think deeply. Here, it seemed, was offered an excellent plan for him to get a final, conclusive revenge on his ancient antagonist. He might disillusionize this man's mind regarding the gold bar and tell about the Aztec plates. He might contract with them in this wise: They might take the map, find the cave, and make an end of Sim Fannan when he came. For Sim undoubtedly would be on his way there by now since the accident had indefinitely interrupted his own plans to go to the cave immediately. The gang might take all of the golden plates that had not been adorned by the ancient owners, if they would leave those bearing symbols and all other scientific relics for him.

Then, with Sim out of the way, George would return to Eileen and claim that he had discovered the Aztec cave. He could trump up a tale of Sim's having failed to put in an appearance at his old desert haunts for so long that his friends had become worried. And he, George, the hero, had gone seeking his boyhood chum. Only to discover his skeleton bleaching on the hot sands. Then he had gone on—so his story would go—and had eventually found the cave himself.

In truth, up until now, George had been going it rather blindly. No very definite plan had been formulated in his mind. He had stolen the original map from Sim's hotel room, rather than make a tracing of it, for the express purpose of leading Sim to the belief that Eileen had betrayed the secret of the combination to the safe. Knowing Sim as he did, he was almost confident that he would do just as he had done. That is, jump to the conclusion that Eileen had betrayed him, say nothing to

her about it, and drop out of her life immediately and irrevocably.

So he had hastened down to the desert, hoping to get there ahead of Sim. Sim had told him and Eileen about the gang that had been trailing him, thinking that he had a valuable placer claim somewhere in the mountains. He would get in touch with this gang, if possible; interest them in the golden plates; and reward them handsomely if they would do away with his rival and conduct him to the cave. And here, lying just across the room from him, was a member of this very gang.

The difficulty was, could he trust them? But he was helpless to do otherwise. For he must act at once or Sim would return, finish his explorations of the cave, and take back to San Francisco indisputable proof of his wonderful discovery. Then Eileen might ask for an explanation of his sudden departure; everything would come out; and George would be forever ostracized from his kind, to say nothing of losing the girl he loved.

But could he trust the gang to play fair? Would they take only the unadorned plates and leave those of scientific value for him? Oh, if only he were not flat on his back, he might——

Bottleneck's gruff voice interrupted his broodings. "This fella's over at Shanty Camp now," he said; "and, if you're interested, we gotta act quick. Or else he'll be sneakin' out to his cache and will prob'ly dodge us boys again. But, o' course, if we had the map—" He allowed George to think the rest of it out for himself.

"He's here, you say?" came from Arlie in a worried tone.

"Sure. Saw 'im yesterday, ridin' with Doctor Bayard."

"I must think this over a little before I have anything to say," said Arlie. "I hardly know what to do, just now."

"Think fast, then," Bottleneck warned him. "This Ike may dash out pronto and lose us in the foothills like he's done many a time before."

CHAPTER XIV

STOLEN AGAIN.

THE participants in the foregoing dialogue would have been much concerned had they known that a portion of their conversation had been overheard by a white-faced girl who sat in an adjoining room. This room was the doctor's office, and Kathleen Dancy, who had met the doctor's wife in the yard on arriving, had been told to go in there to await his coming. Her entrance must have created no disturbance, for, as she seated herself, the conversation going on in the other room had been continued without a break.

The door to this room was open, and she had tried not to listen. She picked up a magazine and tried to read; but the mention of Sim Fannan's name had instantly put her on the alert. A little later, without a qualm of conscience, she had softly crossed the room until she was close to the door and could hear every word that was being uttered. Her lips were pressed tightly together, and her heart was beating fast when George Arlie brought the discussion to a close with the statement that he would consider the other man's proposal.

Kathleen tiptoed back to her chair, one thought in her alarmed mind, and one thought only: By some hook or crook, she must get possession of that map!

For Sim was not now in a position to protect himself. She had learned before entering the doctor's office that Sim had gone through Two Sisters in a private automobile the night before. Apparently, after leaving her and returning to Shanty Camp, he had found an opportunity to "pick up a ride" and had availed himself of it. The stage driver had been able to give her this information when Sim failed to appear

among the passengers of the stage that had followed hers.

She must get that map! But how? She kept very still, lips compressed, as she tried dazedly to think the matter out.

Then from the hospital room came the sound of snoring.

One of the men, at least, had dropped to sleep. No doubt they both were very weak; and sleep came easily. She listened. The snoring was not loud. It might have been termed refined snoring. Bottleneck Oshanter, judging by his gruff voice, would never snore like that, she reasoned. It was probably the city man, Arlie, who had fallen asleep. Even the stress of the moment had not served to keep him awake in his debilitated condition. Perhaps, even, the excitement had helped to bring on sleep.

How could she slip in, under the eyes of the other man, and hunt for that map—provided it was there? A sudden bold and original idea came to her in her extremity as she found herself gazing at a white object hanging over a chairback. A nurse's apron! Swiftly she flew into almost silent action. She crossed to the chair, and as she picked up the apron a white nurse's cap fell to the floor.

In a twinkling she had arrayed herself in both. She knew that she was taking desperate chances of discovery by the owner of the garments, the returning doctor or his wife, or the penetrating eyes of Bottleneck Oshanter. There was no doubt in her mind but that Oshanter had seen her many times in the Pioneer Dance Hall. Everybody at Shanty Camp had seen her. Would he recognize her in the flimsy disguise of a nurse's uniform?

She must take a chance—a desperate chance.

So in she went, glancing swiftly at both beds to locate the occupants and immediately switching her face away from the one in which the outlaw lay.

Her voice trembled but slightly as she said in a subdued tone to Oshanter, though facing the other way; "This is Mr. Arlie, isn't it? I'm the new nurse."

"Yeah," drawled Bottleneck in a tone designed not to awaken his fellow patient. "Let 'im sleep, kid. He's doin' fine. An' you don't look so bad yourself, if anybody wants to know."

"I won't disturb him," she replied, stepping toward Arlie. "But the other nurse told me to"—she had caught a glimpse of a suitcase beneath George Arlie's bed—"to get some linen from his suitcase, which he wanted washed."

Bottleneck grunted and turned over toward the window.

With quaking legs, Kathleen stepped to the bedside of the bandaged man. She stooped, drew the suitcase toward her, and opened the lid. Terribly frightened, but feeling in no wise a criminal, she pawed through the masculine things she found within it.

There was a large leather billbook, with the gold initials, G. A., engraved upon it. Her trembling fingers slipped off the rubber band and delved inside. There were several papers, she found. With eyes that almost refused to see aright, she examined them, one by one. Then the map! She knew it was the right one because, at the bottom, in large carefully inked letters, she read:

SIMEON FANNAN.

She thrust it inside the nurse's apron, dropped the billbook back without even replacing the rubber band, and closed the suitcase lid.

Just as she was about to shove it back in place, she remembered the fictitious piece of linen that needed laundering. Shaking with fear and excitement, she opened the case again, grasped up a perfectly clean and spotless shirt, and tucked it under her arm. Then, the suitcase replaced, she was on her feet again; and it seemed that her shaking knees would fail her as she was forced

to face Oshanter once more as she started out.

"Hey!" came the challenge.

She stopped in her tracks, her back to the gangster. "Wh-what is it?" she asked.

"Bring me a cup o' water, will you, kid?"

"All right. In—in just a moment." She started forward.

"Say, kid!"

"Yes?"

"Look around here at me. Seems like I seen you somewheres before."

"I'm sure you haven't. I came here only to-day." Her back was still turned to him.

"Look around, anyway—I wanta be sure."

What could she do? If she refused, he would be suspicious of something. If she responded to his gruff request she felt sure that he would recognize her. She turned, white as a ghost, and bravely faced him, with a painful smile on her lips and frantic terror in her eyes.

"Why, by gosh, if it ain't the celebrated Madame Volga Van Norman, the fiddle queen!" cried Bottleneck. His eyes widened. "What're you a-doin' here? I thought you was—Say, they's somethin' funny about this. How come it you've turned nurse so sudden?"

"Mr. Ayers and I had a misunderstanding," she bravely lied; "and he—he discharged me. So I took this position. I've nursed before. I'll get your glass of water at once."

"Never mind the water right now," he told her, and his eyes looked vicious and accusatory. "Say, you're Fannan's girl, ain't you? I think I'm beginnin' to sniff a plot. What else did you git outa that there suitcase o' Mr. Arlie's besides that perfectly clean shirt you're carryin'? Come—speak up! I'm onto you, kid!"

There was nothing else to do, so Kathleen wheeled about and ran, dropping the shirt behind her. She heard a roar like the bellow of a bull—heard him scrambling out of bed. In the office, she had the presence of mind to cast off the nurse's cap; but there was not time to doff the apron. Grasping up her own hat, she darted out into the morning sunlight and ran for the front gate with all her might.

"Hey!" The roar came after her. "Stop that, er I'll—"

She glanced back as she sprang through the gate. There in the doorway stood the gigantic Bottleneck Oshanter clad in a long, clean nightgown.

"I'm a-comin' after you!" he threatened.

On and on she ran down the quiet street.

"I tell you I'm a-comin' after you!" There was a dire threat in his voice. "Stop!"

She glanced back fearfully once more, but the white-robed figure still stood in the doorway shaking a huge fist in her direction. Bottleneck Oshanter was deemed a courageous, desperate character. He was credited with having fought it out single-handed with seven Mexicans and given them the worst of it. But it is doubtful if the bad man lives who has the fortitude to chase a running girl down the street in a nightgown.

"Stop! I'll git you and git you right! I'm a-comin' after you, I say!"

But he didn't. Wild horses couldn't have dragged him into the street in that garment. Doctor Bayard had experienced considerable difficulty in getting Bottleneck into it in the first place. Bottleneck had known at the time that the thing was against his deepest principles. And now it had ruined his entire career. Raging, shaking his huge fists, and pounding them together, he disappeared from view, while Kathleen raced on down the depopulated street with her prize clasped to her breast.

CHAPTER XV.

ALL TO THE DESERT.

AT the end of the block Kathleen stopped short, panting furiously. She knew that the business center of the town was in the bisecting street. She must not be seen running here.

She glanced back apprehensively, but no white-robed bad man pursued her. Her shaking fingers removed the nurse's apron, and she put her hat on her head. Wadding the apron, she walked swiftly around the corner, passed several stores before which bench-warmers loafed and gaped at her, and presently came to a door over which was the sign, "Rooms for Rent."

She darted through the doorway, tripped up a dusty set of stairs, and pulled a bellcord that she found on the floor above.

From an aged woman she readily secured a room. When the door was closed after the landlady, the girl flung herself on the bed and sobbed. Then suddenly she found herself laughing. The picture of the raging bad man in his nightie struck her funny bone, and tribulation gave place to humor.

Presently she busied herself. She washed her face, rearranged her hair, and went out in search of the landlady. She gave her a dollar and asked her to find a boy who would carry a message for her. The landlady's own son was the greedy applicant. Kathleen wrote a note to Doctor Bayard, wrapped it with the apron in a newspaper, and sent the boy to the doctor's house with the package.

He presented himself at her door when he returned, as she had requested him to do.

"Well?" she asked.

He massaged the calf of one bare leg with the foot of the other. "I give it to Mis' Bayard," he reported. "She didn't say nothin'. They're pretty busy over there. They got a maniac to 'tend to, I guess. I beat it. I ain't lost no crazy men."

Kathleen smiled and sent him down to the drug store to buy a pencil and a sheet of tracing paper, if such a thing as the latter could be had in the little town. She had resolved to take no chances on that map's being taken away from her.

The boy returned presently with a piece of paper that the druggist had said "might do."

Kathleen closed the door on the curious youngster, swept the neat covering from an old-fashioned marble-top table, and went to work at making a tracing of Simeon Fannan's map.

Her work finished, she remained in her room. And in about an hour Doctor Bayard presented himself at her door, in response to her note. She explained what she could to him about the scene in his home without bringing Simeon Fannan into it, and the physician was readily in sympathy with her. He knew something about Bottleneck Oshanter and had no use for him aside from using him to save the life of his patient.

Telling her to leave everything to him, and be ready to go with him to Shanty Camp and the ranch within half an hour, he left her to herself again. And, within the appointed time, they were away behind his plunging mustangs.

"Bottleneck has left me," was his first speech as they rattled out of town on an obscure course. "I couldn't hold him. He's pretty wobbly on his pins, but his magnificent health will probably hold him up. He'll be taking the next stage for Shanty Camp, I guess. I hope we get there ahead of him."

The mustangs proved equal to the task, and the doctor pushed them hard. When the girl stepped from the buggy before the cabin on Shanty Creek the great sorrow over the loss of her beloved father, partly driven from her

mind by the frenzy of her experience at Two Sisters, returned with the full force of its bitterness. But bravely she faced the ordeal. Arrangements were made to bury her father that day under the cottonwoods by the creek. The kindly physician attended to everything, and before night one more victim of piteous disease which has claimed so many was laid to rest.

The man, hiding in the trees and watching the simple ceremony, crook though he was, had the good grace to remain aloof until Doctor Bayard had ridden off. Even then he stayed hidden for an hour but never removed his eyes from the cabin door through which Kathleen Dancy had vanished. Then he screwed up his courage for something that he did not like and walked into the open.

Presently he was knocking softly on Kathleen's door. The girl, seated in the semigloom of evening, realized instantly that she must face a new ordeal when she heard the tapping. She had been weeping softly, but she dried her eyes and answered the summons.

"Hello, Miss Dancy," said Ed Ayers as the door opened before him.

"Good evening, Mr. Ayers," she responded simply.

"Sorry to hear about your father's death," he said. "O' course you won't wanta play the violin for us at The Pioneer to-night. Can't blame you. That'll be all right with me."

"Thank you," said the girl.

There followed a long pause, then—"Can I come in a minute, Miss Dancy? There's a little matter I'd like to talk to you about."

"Certainly," she replied, and stepped back from the doorway.

The girl had known what was coming, but not just how or when. She was prepared. She knew that it would be useless for her to claim that she had destroyed the map, or given it to somebody else. Besides, she was weary of lying and subterfuge. She was unpracticed in both.

Ayers sat down. He spoke about the weather; of the goldseekers constantly flocking to Shanty Camp; of the various finds up in the yellow buttes.

Then his face hardened suddenly, and he cleared his throat. "Miss Dancy," he stated, "I'll have to have that map. I like you aplenty, and I've treated you pretty square. But I don't mind tellin' you now that I——"

"Oh, I fully understand," Kathleen interrupted in a tired tone. "I knew it was useless for me to steal it. But I did my best. I knew you'd come for it. I know it would be silly for me to tell you I've destroyed it."

She stood up to go for it. Ayers rose promptly and kept at her side until she had placed it in his hands, allowing her no opportunity to tear it up. He seemed apologetic as he accepted it.

"O' course you understand that this Fannan won't be harmed if he acts decent about this thing. All we want is to see that the gold goes back to its proper owners."

"Don't be ridiculous, Mr. Ayers!" she said in a tense voice. "I know that you have no idea of returning any gold to its rightful owners. You and the Oshanter Gang want it for yourselves. I'm not deceived."

He shrugged his shoulders. "O' course there's no use tryin' to convince you otherwise, if your mind's made up," he told her lamely, as he unfolded the paper and gave it a careful scrutiny. "Well—thanks. I'll be goin', I guess. Sorry about your father."

Silently she followed him to the door.

"Whenever you wanta come back to The Pioneer and play for us, I'm ready to have you," he said, stepping outside.

"Thank you," she returned. "But I doubt if I'll be back. I'm leaving for Los Angeles to-morrow, for a time, at least. I may return."

"Well, good-by." And he was gone.

When the cotton woods hid him she flew into furious action. She had made her preparations that afternoon. She closed doors and windows and locked them. What she needed to take with her was already packed and ready in the little stable. The mules had been caught up and were tied to their mangers. Night was close at hand. It was time to act.

In her possession was the tracing that she had taken from Simeon Fannan's original map. The original she had placed in Ed Ayers' hands. Now she must beat the Oshanter Gang to the cave. Only her duty concerning the last rites of her dead father had prevented her from striking out on her long journey immediately after she had stolen the map.

A saddle was soon on the back of one of the mules. What she considered that she needed for the trip was bundled upon the back of the other hybrid. A professional packer would have laughed at her attempts at loading a cargo upon the back of a beast of burden, but Kathleen thought that the pack would hold until experienced hands could rearrange it.

Riding one mule and leading the other, she set off down Shanty Creek in the darkness. An hour later she reached the road to Two Sisters, at a point about three miles from Shanty Camp. Here she dismounted and sat down in the dark to wait.

Burdensome hours passed; the desert night wore on. She was becoming apprehensive when, of a sudden, from far across the level waste, there came the frantic thuddety-thud of galloping hoofs. Soon the doctor's lunging mustangs were with difficulty jerked to a stop before her.

"Oh, at last!" she cried, hastening forward. "I thought you were never coming, doctor!"

"Took quite a time to get everything in readiness," he told her. "But I made the grade. I got two good men, and they're coming along behind me as fast as possible with the pack horses. Got extra things for you, too—a pack outfit for your mule and all that you ought to need. Did anybody come for the map?"

"Yes, Ayers. I gave it to him. He seemed to hate his job."

"M'm-m! Maybe he did. He's probably learned to appreciate you. You've struck a deeper chord in his nature. Too bad you had to give the map up. But of course there was no way out of it. To say you'd destroyed it would have been stupid."

"Oh, said Kathleen, "I took the liberty of changing the map a bit."

"What's that? Changed it?"

"Yes. There are several groups of buttes indicated in the map. An X marks the cave in one of the groups. I simply wrote 'Water' opposite this X; and I made a new X and labeled it 'Cave'."

"But, child, that won't do!" the doctor expostulated. "They'll get onto it, won't they?"

"I doubt if they will. Of course my lettering appeared fresher than Sim's, but I rubbed the entire map on the rug until it looked smeary and old. I think that my lettering now looks as ancient as his."

"By George! I hope you get away with it! Did Ayers seem satisfied when he examined it?"

"Entirely. And he gave it a minute inspection, too."

"Fine! Good work! You're a clever girl. No doubt you directed them far from the true course."

"Oh, yes. But that doesn't mean that Sim is safe. They may stumble upon him by accident, you know. He won't be on his guard, perhaps, and may show himself. And, doctor——"

"Yes?"

"Here's another copy of the map that I made for you this evening. Take it; and, if we don't return within a rea-

sonable length of time, couldn't you arrange for a search party?"

"I'll do all I can for you, my girl. By George, you are clever!"

"Thank you. You've been so kind to father and me. I don't know where the money's coming from to pay you if you are obliged to outfit a search party, but——"

"Tut, tut, tut! None of that! We're not worrying about the money. But I wish you would explain your trouble more fully—that is, this Fannan's trouble."

"I can't," she answered in a low voice. "The secret isn't mine to divulge to anybody."

"Well, sorry about that. But I won't insist. And I'll try to keep an eye on this fellow Arlie, too, while you're away. I'll try to watch his movements so long as he's in this part of the country."

"I'll appreciate that," she told him. "I hardly understand myself where he comes in, but—— Listen! What's that sound?"

Through the silent night came the noise of several sets of hoofs moving rapidly toward them.

"The two fellows I hired for you," exclaimed Doctor Bayard. "You can trust them implicitly, I think. I know one of them well, and he told me he thinks the other fellow is all right. John Ray is the one I know. And I believe the other fellow is called 'Herk' Hanger. I assume that Herk is short for Hercules."

Out of the night came dark horses and dark men. Calls were exchanged. And then began the business of repacking Kathleen's mule, in readiness for the long night ride around Shanty Camp and south over the mysterious desert.

To be continued in the next issue of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE.

SEEKS PIONEER FATHER'S GRAVE

AFTER an absence of forty-eight years, Morris Moch recently revisited Reno, Nevada, on a quest for information about his father, one of the pioneer citizens of the State.

In the early days of Nevada, the elder Moch was one of the first county commissioners of Washoe County. His election took place when the county seat was at what is now the old ghost town, Washoe City. When lots were opened for sale in the township of Reno, in 1868, Mr. Moch, Sr., was one of those to join in the rush. He opened a restaurant on Virginia Street. After two years, he went to Eureka, where there was another mining boom.

In the early days, the pioneer Moch's wife ran a boarding house on the Comstock, catering to many of the famous characters of that period, including the "Big Four." One of her daughters was born in a prairie schooner between Placerville and Virginia City, on the Overland Trail. After gathering such data as he could in Reno, Mr. Moch's next objective was Eureka, Nevada, where his father was burned to death in a fire in 1879. It is the son's intention to locate his father's grave and erect a suitable monument in honor of the sturdy old pioneer.

Ten Miles to Sunset

By Frank Triem

Author of "Little Gray Men of the Desert," etc.

AS Tony Collins, alias "The Snake," staggered in through the open door of the cabin his bloodshot eyes were able to take in only the briefest details concerning his surroundings. For two days now—in fact, ever since he had fled into the desert before a sheriff's posse—he had wandered about among these desolate hills; but for the provident finding of a tiny water hole, he would long since have been dead. In a vague sort of way he realized that he was babbling incoherently. Glimpsing a full bucket of water standing on a box beside a small sheet-iron stove, he wavered across to it. He couldn't lift the bucket; but he dropped to his knees and plunged his face, scalded from his own perspiration and the baking of the desert sun, deep into the receptacle. He was swallowing the water in great, half-strangled gulps.

He desisted presently and raised his dripping countenance from the bucket. A peculiar hissing had penetrated through the film of delirium that pressed in on him, and now he glanced unseeingly about. At the other side of the cabin there was a bunk with a litter of blankets in it; a few straight-backed chairs stood about; and in the center of the room he saw a badly scarred table.

Slowly he turned his head. Upon the stove near his side was a tea kettle, and from this came the hissing that had caught his attention. Again he thrust his face deep into the bucket of heaven-sent liquid. But not for long. He had been too weak, too far gone down the road leading to complete collapse, for his system to stand the sudden excess of moisture. The first intimation of trouble came when he raised his head for the second time. He had felt weak—very, very weak—when he came through the door; but now he seemed paralyzed. His muscles refused to do his bidding, and he was terribly nauseated. With a babbling

cry, Tony Collins toppled over sideways and lay still.

There followed an interval in which he was dimly conscious of the alternation of day and night, of periods of baking heat succeeded by a cold that chilled him through and through. And he heard noises—the clanging of giant bells when delirium gripped him, the shrieking laughter of nightmare creatures that gibbered at him from out the gloom. Occasionally he heard the calm voice of some one—some one with big, strong hands that held him in his bunk. For he had been moved to the bunk, he knew; vaguely he realized that the owner of the cabin was caring for him as tenderly and efficiently as any trained nurse could have done.

Once, during a brief spell of comparative lucidity, Tony Collins had a queer experience. He found himself lying on his side, hemmed in by blankets and a faded pillow; and, out in the middle of the floor, kneeling over some glittering objects, was a man. He was a short, heavily built old fellow with kindly gray eyes and a strong, serene face; and now his glance was fixed musingly on a queer instrument between his knees. It was a mold, Tony The Snake saw—a mold in which were two long, narrow pools of molten metal. There were three tiny ingots lying near by.

Then Tony Collins moaned and was writhing. Again the giant bells clanged in the semidarkness that pressed in upon him; again fiend voices mocked and shrieked, while strong hands held him lest he throw himself from the bunk. A long time later he fell asleep.

When at last The Snake once more opened his eyes, it was early morning; although sunlight poured in through the open door and lay upon the floor it was still a pale orange. The sun was just rising, Collins told himself. The odor of coffee permeated the little cabin, and there came a low whistling from somewhere beyond the head of the bunk. Turning, the invalid saw his benefactor bending over the little sheet-iron stove, busily poking at something in a big skillet. Tony tried to sit up, and the room whirled in crazy gyrations. With a moan he fell back. The whistling ceased; he heard heavy steps approaching the bunk, and a moment later some one with great, strong fingers was feeling his pulse. Tony Collins opened his eyes and stared up.

He found himself looking into the kindly features of the old man who had befriended him. The other smiled a reassuring smile and picked up a cracked earthenware cup which he pressed to the sick man's lips. Collins drank; but long before he had had all he wanted the cup was pried from his eager lips. Collins glowered with obvious resentment at the other, who presently spoke.

"You got to take it easy, son," he warned his guest. "I'm gonna make a trip to the spring purty soon, but this-here cupful's got to last you ontil then."

Later the invalid devoured half a dozen crisp slices of bacon which the man of the cabin handed him on a tin plate. The incident of the drink, however, had filled him with an unreasoning anger out of all proportion to its cause. It intruded even into his subsequent sleep.

He dozed fitfully through the heat of the day, dimly aware of the comings and goings of the old man. No longer did the bells clang and the voices shriek when he moved about; although he was very weak his delirium was a thing of the past.

He awoke with the soft dusk filtering in through the cabin door. Glancing down along his bunk, he could see a few pale stars in the blue-gray evening sky; from a considerable distance came the insulting "Hee-haw!" of a mule.

Tony Collins sniffed hungrily and turned his head. The old man was once more cooking; and at Collins' move he glanced over his shoulder. He smiled down at his patient, then came stalking across. Tony noticed that he walked with a curious, bent-kneed stride. He was bow-legged, as if he had spent much of his life in the saddle.

"Howdy, stranger!" he greeted. "My name's Boyd—Michael Boyd by rights, although most folks calls me just plain Mike. I found you nigh a week ago, lyin' on your face an' breathing like you was on your way out fer sure. Since then you been a right sick man, but I reckon now you're as good as cured. You're lookin' a heap better, Mister——"

"Collins—Tony Collins," the man in the bunk supplied. He stared intently up into the other's face; but apparently old Michael Boyd had never heard the name before. It would have been rather extraordinary if he had, Tony reflected; the only danger was that he had talked in his delirium.

The odor of burning bacon sent old Mike hurrying across to the stove; and from then on their conversation was desultory. Boyd fed Tony Collins a liberal supper and allowed him to wash it down with a modest portion of water. Afterward the older man sat in the open doorway of his cabin, smoking a much-used corncob pipe and staring out into the night.

Tony Collins spoke but seldom. He lay silently peering about the dusk-shrouded cabin; and often his glance came to rest upon the broad back of his benefactor. To the veiled animosity of his glance was added something else—a pucker that might have denoted the stirrings of greed. Collins was trying to remember something—something about a mold of wet sand in a cigar box, and of tiny yellow ingots. He had a distinct impression concerning the matter; but, whether it had been the fruit of his delirium, or whether he had really seen it, he couldn't tell. As he considered the problem his black eyes sparkled with a mean light, and his thin, crooked mouth was compressed. Unless he was mistaken, this was an opportunity that would repay a little intensive investigation. He decided that he'd at least look into the business. The fact that he would be robbing the man who had saved his life meant nothing. Mike Boyd had tried to deprive him of water, he assured himself, and this fancied slight gave an additional lure to the enterprise he was considering.

He had scant opportunity for prowling about during the next few days, however. Mike Boyd was always on hand—smoking, cooking, tidying up the cabin, or perhaps working in the little rocky patch he liked to call his "garden." Tony The Snake waited, and watched, and cursed. It was maddening to one of his instincts and disposition to be thus thwarted by a bow-legged old man with iron-gray hair, and slow, drawling speech. Collins gritted his teeth, but he continued to wait.

All this time he was fast regaining his strength. He had donned his clothes the day following their first conversation; and, to his surprise, he found that the blue-black automatic pistol and its spring shoulder-holster were still among his effects. To be sure, Mike Boyd was a trusting old coot; but still—— However, the gun and the holster were there; and a brief examination convinced Collins that the cartridges had been neither removed nor tampered with. By shaking them he could hear the rattle of the powder inside. He slung the holster on as he dressed, with a nod of satisfaction. He would be ready for Boyd, if the latter should be hard to handle. Things were going his way, he told himself. Soon now, he would even the score for that incident of the cup of water.

Another day and another passed without happening of any sort. Tony Collins loafed about the cabin, occasionally exchanging words with the old man but for the most part maintaining a moody silence. Collins' little, beady eyes were constantly busy; for his first task, he knew, was to locate the hiding-place of the gold.

Although he said nothing to warn his host it seemed for a time as if Mike Boyd were reading his thoughts. More than once the crook caught the latter's quizzical regard fixed upon him as he stared hungrily about the cabin, and one evening Collins came suddenly from the building to find his host cleaning a heavy six-shooter. Tony The Snake halted in his tracks; his eyes narrowed, and he licked his lips. The old man, he saw, was peering up at him with an unspoken question in his glance. After a moment's silent regard Collins turned and reëntered the cabin. The time for a show-down hadn't yet come, he decided, but an additional impetus was added to his growing hatred for the man who had saved him.

There was one little matter that presented a serious obstacle to his enterprise, and that was the question of a get-away. It wouldn't be so difficult to put Mike Boyd out of the game, and after that he could probably find the gold; but what then? He had been lost—most thoroughly and completely lost—when he stumbled upon this cabin; and he didn't have the least idea as to the way out. He didn't dare ask the old man lest that individual suspect the truth. Some way or another, he would have to find out for himself.

And then one evening ten days or so after his coming, Tony Collins decided to go for a walk. He told his host of his intention in a short, jerky sentence, turned on his heel, and rambled from the cabin and up the little gulch on whose margin it was perched. The sun had already set, and now the desert hills were bathed in a soft, mellow, white light. Soon this too would be gone, and only the stars would be in the sky; for the moon was rising late. But Collins didn't intend to go very far.

Up the little gorge he went until it petered out and he found himself upon a sort of table-land, or mesa. Four or five hundred yards ahead was a low divide; The Snake wondered what could be on the other side of it. Although the twilight was fast deepening into night, he quickened his steps and hurried on. From that ridge he believed he might get a good view of the surrounding territory and perhaps locate a town, or at least a road that would lead him out of the bewildering mazes of the foothills.

He scrambled through the soft darkness up the side of the ridge. Far off, a coyote howled mournfully; once the clatter of gravel from behind brought him around, a snarl on his lips and his hand on his automatic. It was nothing, though—merely rocks which had been dislodged by his passing footsteps. He turned and strode on. And then he gained the top of the ridge. He found himself staring off across other chains of hills; but nowhere was there the twinkle of a light. With sinking hopes he advanced across the summit and looked down the other side.

He came to an abrupt halt. His heart was pounding, and an exultant cry rose unbidden to his lips. For there below him, cut into a wall of solid rock, was a road broad enough and strong enough to support an automobile! There was a way out after all, he told himself; somewhere along this road must be a good-sized town. Leaping, scrambling, he made his way down to the highway. Close examination confirmed his surmise; it had been cut out of the solid rock.

He turned at last and began to retrace his steps. It was quite dark, now;

and he stumbled often as he forced himself up the bank and back across the summit of the hills. For a time he felt doubts as to whether he was going to be able to find the cabin in the dark, but he hit the little gully easily enough and ten minutes later walked in the open door of Michael Boyd's home.

An old-fashioned kerosene lantern dangling from a rafter showed in its smoky yellow light the figure of the old man, bending above the little sheet-iron cook-stove. Boyd glanced over his shoulder and smiled as Collins entered. Collins was still breathing heavily from his recent exertions, and he realized that his face was flushed, his eyes sparkling. Boyd apparently didn't notice his excitement, however. The old man turned back to his cooking, and Tony The Snake seated himself upon a chair. When he could trust himself, he spoke.

"I was up the gully a ways," he commented. "I went clear over them hills an' found a road. I been wondering——"

"It was the trail to Sunset City," Boyd offered without looking around. "I been along it, many's the time."

"How far is Sunset City?"

"Oh—mebbe ten miles er so. Why?"

"I just wondered."

A heavy silence descended upon the two men in the cabin. From the skillet came a sudden crackling as the old-timer thrust fresh bacon down into the boiling grease; absently Tony Collins took a package of cigarettes from his pocket, selected one, and lighted it. He had been hoarding this last pack, but now that a way out lay before him he felt like celebrating. It was hard to keep that feeling of triumph from reflecting in his face; for, with the discovery of the road, his whole problem was solved. It would be a long, hard walk to this Sunset City, but he'd take food and water and would make it easily enough. After that he'd simply disappear. Those ingots of gold would go with him.

And then old Mike Boyd surprised him. It was while the two were busy over their food that the man of the cabin glanced casually up and spoke.

"I been kinda thinkin' of takin' a little prospectin' trip," he remarked. "I been puttin' it off ontil you was well enough to look out fer yourself. But I reckon you kin manage a few days 'thout me, now. How abouten it?"

Tony Collins looked surprised. Swiftly he considered the old man's proposition; could it be that his host had suspected his intentions and was setting some kind of a trap for him? Tony didn't think so. Somehow, Mike Boyd didn't seem the kind that would resort to guile. He would be more likely to start something with that long-barreled gun of his. No, his proposition was real and welcome!

"I'll be glad to watch out for the cabin while you're gone," The Snake assured his host, wondering meanwhile if his voice trembled or if he only thought it did. "I got nothing else to do. How long did you say you'd be gone?"

"Oh, mebbe three-four days. Might even run out to a week—I dunno. Anyways they's plenty of grub an' tobacco. You kin be right comfortable!"

So it was agreed. It gave Collins time to take the cabin apart, if that should be necessary; and, best of all, he wouldn't be running the slightest danger from his host. Mike Boyd would be disposed of. By the time he came back his guest would be far, far away. He almost grinned.

Long before sunup the following morning, The Snake stood in the open door of the cabin watching stolidly while Mike Boyd headed down the gorge. Boyd had unearthed from some distant valley a decrepit mule; and upon the latter's patient back had

been loaded supplies for a week's trip. Boyd assured his guest that he would be back before that, in all probability. Almost genially, Mister Collins had told him to stay as long as he liked. A week, or even all of a lifetime—it really didn't make any difference to him at all!

After Mike Boyd had disappeared The Snake turned back into the cabin. Quickly he brewed a pot of coffee over the sheet-iron stove, meanwhile staring about him. There was an impatient gleam in his little, close-set eyes; his fingers itched to be at those ingots. There had been three of them on the floor, he remembered, and two in the cigar-box mold. That would mean five bars of gold.

He finished his coffee and got busy. He tore the blankets from the bunk and flung them contemptuously out the open door; he kicked the chairs and the table after them. The stove he had extinguished by the simple expedient of pouring half the bucket of water upon the flames; and presently he took it outside where he emptied it of its soaked ashes, half-burned wood, and soot. There was nothing; and examination of the rusted stove-pipe was equally barren of results. Collins began to lose his temper.

The sun rose, and in an instant the cabin was hot. The air outside danced and quivered; Collins had raised clouds of dust which now choked him as he worked. But still he could find no trace of the ingots; and, at last, with the entire contents of the cabin in the dirt outside, he turned his attention to the walls and ceiling. He sweat and cursed and raved; and he found—nothing.

There came a time when, baffled and almost ready to acknowledge himself licked, he stood in the middle of the wrecked cabin and stared about him. The walls had yielded nothing, and he could see that there was no hiding place in the roof. He glanced at his feet in mute question.

And then he dropped to his knees. In the hard-packed earth he had noticed a slight bulge; as he probed under the ground with his jackknife, the blade encountered something hard. It might be a rock, of course. It wasn't.

Ten minutes later, sweating and dust-caked but triumphant, he had unearthed a chest perhaps two feet long by half as broad and deep. His joy was soon changed to gloom, however; for not only was the chest composed of either wrought iron or steel, but it was securely locked. Seizing it by its two handles he lugged it outside. It must weigh all of thirty or thirty-five pounds, he told himself. He could hear some heavy objects clanking about inside.

"The gold's there, all right," he assured himself gloomily. "But I got to get it out—or else cart the whole blame chest to Sunset! I ain't going to do that!"

Five minutes of violent endeavor convinced Tony Collins that it was a case of either taking chest and all—or nothing. With a grunt of mingled disgust and rage, he finally strapped the bulky affair upon his back. He turned toward the door. He had found a small canvas-wrapped canteen; and now he filled this from the bucket of water which he had moved outside at the start of his search. He made up a lunch, glanced once more about him, and left the building.

At the head of the gorge The Snake turned for a last glance. Old Michael Boyd's cabin looked as if it had been struck by a cyclone; the furniture was flung helter-skelter outside, and the door swung idly. He grinned a wolfish grin as he thought of what must be the prospector's feelings when he got back from that trip. Perhaps Mike Boyd would be more liberal of water with the next traveler!

Then he turned. He descended the hill on the other side, and a little later was upon the road to Sunset City.

"Ten miles to Sunset!" he told himself, "just ten miles; and then a good supper, a drink, and a ticket to San Francisco!"

A scant two hours after the departure of Tony Collins, a man toiled wearily up the rocky floor of the gully and came within sight of the cabin. It was old Michael Boyd, and for a long moment he stared at the remains of his home. Then, with an impatient jerk upon the lead rope by which he drew his mule after him, he went scrambling up the side of the gorge.

He halted in the doorway and stood looking about him. Slowly his wrinkled face flushed until it was the color of brick; his normally mild gray eyes flashed. Anger was in his countenance, but there was no surprise. As a matter of fact, he had half expected this. His journey had been undertaken as much to give the crook a chance to show his cards as for any other purpose. Incidentally he had visited a government experimental station eight or ten miles away and had there made certain preparations that might have surprised Tony Collins.

Michael Boyd secured the animal, then began deliberately to track his recent guest. He was an expert at this sort of thing; and now slowly but steadily he worked his way over the dry, hard-baked earth. He dipped down into the gorge and went up it to the summit of the hills. Over these he went, until he came within sight of the road to Sunset City. Here he stopped. And slowly his expression of anger changed to one of pity. A grim smile tugged at the corners of his strong mouth, and he shook his head.

A moment later he had turned and was hastening back to the cabin. For a time he seemed to be considering some point; but at length he nodded. Without pausing to put his house to rights, he refilled the two big canteens strapped to the mule's back.

"C'mon, old-timer," he rumbled as he turned and led the way toward the distant road. "We got to travel—and travel fast—if we're gonna save that worthless coyote's hide fer him. At that, we may be too late. We'll do our best, though."

And while Mike Boyd hurried after him, Tony Collins plodded steadily on along the road to Sunset. From the first he had known it would be hot; but he hadn't conceived of such heat as this. Along the old road he went, through furnacelike draws and gullies and across blistering mesas. The strong box banged against his shoulders until they were raw; but Collins gritted his teeth and went ahead. The highway was descending gradually but continuously; although in many places it was almost obliterated, he managed to keep to it. At several points it had been completely covered by drifting sand and even underbrush; and, at one place, a cave-in from above had blocked it. He scrambled up and around the barrier, wondering meanwhile what sort of a Chamber of Commerce Sunset City could have, to allow their roads to get into such shape.

Eventually he found himself traversing a dreary region given over entirely to black lava beds. Flinty fragments sharp as razors cut his shoes to bits; but, as long as the road was clearly marked, he didn't particularly object. By evening his troubles would be a thing of the past.

There was one problem that worried him, however, and that was his scanty supply of water. He had supposed that the quart canteen would be sufficient for the trip to Sunset City; but by noon he had emptied it and had thrown it away. With the chest upon

his shoulders his progress was slow and very laborious. He cursed his lack of foresight; and, for a time, considered turning back for a fresh supply of water. He finally decided against this. Undoubtedly he would be uncomfortable, but he wished to get out of the country as quickly as possible; and he would waste two or three hours at least in a return trip and fresh start.

At noon he unstrapped his burden and wearily seated himself upon the edge of the road. Without enthusiasm he devoured the lunch he had brought. He estimated that he had come perhaps three or four miles—which would leave between six and seven to go. He could make it easily by evening, he told himself. If there was a train through Sunset City, by the following morning he would be far away.

He scrambled to his feet after his meal, lashed the strong box upon his back and continued. The food hadn't been particularly refreshing, nor had he wanted it; but he knew that he would need to keep up his strength. When he got to town his first act would be to have a bath and drink all the water he could hold; then he would get a good supper and a ticket out on the next train.

One hour, two hours dragged their weary lengths past. Once, Tony Collins, pausing in his slow march to mop the perspiration from his face, glimpsed something in the sage off to the left of the road. Curiosity prompted him to walk across and peer down at it. It was the remains of a wagon, he saw; and there was something else. With an inarticulate gurgle of fear he recoiled. Grinning up at him was the lifeless visage of a human skull, eye sockets agape and jaws open. Collins stared for one brief instant, then turned and almost ran along the road. Although his heart was hammering at his ribs he had a great longing to put much distance between himself and that leering thing that had once been a man's face.

He came to realize, a long time later, that he was talking to himself. He felt curiously light and giddy; his mouth and throat burned; and his tongue was hard to manage. Although he couldn't remember when or where he had done it he saw that he had discarded his coat; the burning rays of the sun pierced his light shirt as if it had been sheerest gauze. He had unstrapped the chest from his shoulders and was dragging it by one of its wrought-iron handles. It seemed miraculously to have increased in weight; he found himself considering the advisability of discarding it. He could hear its contents rattling about at its lower end, however; and that spurred him on. After all, it was only ten miles from old Mike Boyd's place to Sunset City; and he had undoubtedly come more than half of the way. The sun was slanting down into the West, he saw. He had been traveling a long time.

Another hour passed. To the city-bred man's mind, nothing to compare with this temperature had ever been known. It was suffocating the way the waves of heat billowed up into his face from the rocky road. He was gasping for breath, and his heart was pounding like an overworked trip hammer. And then he halted. Swaying slightly, Tony Collins stared out across a sea of sage and arrow weed to where a dull red column rose against the dazzling sky. As his vision cleared he perceived that he was looking at a brick chimney perhaps four hundred yards away. It was a chimney from which the building had been either burned or torn down, he decided.

The sight gave him renewed strength. It meant, he told himself, that he was approaching a human habitation—probably the town of Sunset. Soon all his troubles would be ended. On, on.

Once he came to realize that he had dropped the chest and was kicking at it—clawing the massive iron lock in futile rage. He mastered himself; seized one handle and was again dragging the strong box along the road.

Some one was singing in a cracked tenor; he knew that it was himself. He made a great effort, but somehow he couldn't stop that horrid croaking for more than a few minutes. When he did the silence of the desert rushed in at him like a solid wave, and he hastily resumed it. Another hour was gone. He found himself reciting something—a short sentence. Over and over he hoarsely chanted the words:

"Ten miles to Sunset City—ten miles—to—Sunset——"

Strange what had become of his shirt, he reflected. He stopped and for a time stared stupidly about him. Had he dropped it, he wondered? No, he couldn't have done that. He must have taken it off himself. But if so, where had he put it? His gun was still slung in its customary position under his arm.

He glanced mutely down. The earth was revolving around him in slow circles; he was forced to spread his feet farther apart to keep from falling. His shirt was nowhere visible, and at length he was again going on. The blazing sun and his own perspiration made the smarting of his exposed shoulders almost unbearable. Once he whimpered; then his jaws gritted, and he forced himself to stagger ahead. Whatever else he was, Tony Collins was no coward.

The sun was dropping slowly—very slowly—toward the horizon. Now it seemed to swell in size, to grow tremendously brilliant. Collins found himself seated upon the iron chest, mumbling incoherent remarks and staring at the light. Soon it would be gone, and the desert would be enfolded in blackness.

There came a time when Tony Collins was ready to fall down and quit. His strength had gradually been worn away until it was all he could do to drag the iron chest ten feet before he would be forced to rest. His heart was thudding too rapidly for him to count its beats; his throat and mouth ached until he could have screamed. He realized that he should be in sight of Sunset City; slowly he swept the horizon with his dimming vision. The sun, he noted, was grazing the skyline; another half hour and it would be dusk.

And then his glance came to a focus. The road ahead ascended a gradual incline, beyond which he could glimpse little; but what he did see brought a croaking, exultant cry to his lips. Two red shafts pointed like church spires toward the sky. He realized that he was looking at the chimneys of factories, or perhaps smelting-plants. That would be Sunset City, just beyond the next ridge! Somehow or other—he never knew just how—he managed to swing the iron chest upon his shoulders. He was staggering along the road. Every step caused him agony from the sharp edges of his burden, but he kept on. He was toiling up the gradual ascent; four hundred yards ahead was the brow of the grade. From there he would be able to see his objective.

The sun went down, and for a brief interval the western horizon was ablaze with a glory of reds and golds. Then swiftly these faded; the desert about him was cast into a vague semidarkness.

A long time later he gained the top of the climb and wavered forward. As he advanced the town below him slowly came within his range of vision. There were houses and stores fronting on a broad, empty street; near the outskirts of the village were the two factories whose chimneys he had glimpsed.

He dropped his burden with a re-

sounding thud and stood staring. There was something wrong with the gathering of buildings, but for a few minutes he couldn't tell just what it was. And then he realized. There were no lights—none whatever! Each and every structure was dark and shrouded in gloom. Queer, he reflected; but of course until a few minutes ago it had been broad day.

As he stared a sudden crashing in the sage off to his left brought him facing that way. Half a dozen shaggy, long-eared beasts regarded him curiously, then whirled and went bounding off. Collins perceived they were burros that had escaped or been turned free. Now they were as wild as any antlered buck. But they couldn't hurt him; with a relieved grunt he picked up the chest and started on the long downward climb.

The twilight was thickening swiftly into the desert night; as he went stumbling down the road, a few stars appeared in the blue-black sky. Later, Collins found himself picking his way through a growth of trees scarcely higher than his head. On he went; the road wound erratically to the right, then to the left, and emerged suddenly into the main street of Sunset City. Staring dazedly about him, Tony Collins advanced. On either side were buildings; but now that air of aloofness and detachment was changed. In its place was decay. Slowly it permeated to his stupefied brain. The houses on either side were unlighted; that was because they were tenantless. The doors swung idly; the windows had long since been broken. Through the thickening gloom he perceived that they were all like that. Sunset City was only an empty husk.

Something inside his head snapped. Collins felt himself drop the iron chest in the dirt, realized that he was laughing a harsh, metallic laugh as he ran down the middle of the road. The houses on either side peered at him out of the gloom like specters closing in. He babbled his fear and ran on.

A little later he came to an abrupt halt. He stood swaying; for a long interval he peered through the thickening blackness. There was a queer old building at his right—a building with boarded-up windows, a false front, and an open door. But, was he mistaken, or had he really seen something vanish into that structure? He wanted to approach and look inside, but somehow he couldn't. He stood swaying and peering at it through wide, wild eyes. He imagined he felt a malignant regard fixed upon him.

He continued slowly up the street. A last remnant of his self-control was asserting itself. He knew that if he opened his lips he would shriek and go mad. Deep down inside him something told him that his life depended on his keeping control of himself. There was another problem facing him, and that was his thirst. Somewhere the inhabitants of this old town must have gotten water. He had read of the wells and subterranean rivers that supplied moisture to such places; probably there was one near here. At any rate he would look.

He stumbled on through the gloom. Resolutely he kept his glance from those empty houses that lined the way. There was something vaguely horrible about them; and, in his weakened condition, more than half delirious from thirst, he was already very near the point of insanity. He stared fixedly ahead. He was approaching the upper end of the forgotten street. The buildings thinned away on either side of him, and still he had seen no sign of the well. Despair settled upon him like a pall.

And then in the gloom before him, Collins glimpsed it—a space perhaps half a dozen feet square and boarded over. With a sob of thankfulness he

stumbled forward and dropped to his knees at the side of the planking. He pounded weakly with one fist; a hollow, resonant sound was his reward.

Still on his knees he began to tug at the planks. They were very old and dry as cork; a few minutes later he managed to pry one of them from its frame. He stared down into the depression but could see nothing. He attacked the next one feverishly. He tugged and grunted; with his last ounce of strength he managed to wrench first one end loose, then the other. Before him was an opening perhaps six feet long by two or three broad.

Slowly and against his will he turned his head. Again had come that feeling of being the target of unseen eyes. He felt his scalp twitching; his breath came hissingly through his clenched teeth. Something was moving behind him. Then the spell was broken. Collins' lips parted, and he cried out. Regarding him through a haze shot with streamers of red and gold were two green eyes. A massive figure loomed above him—was moving toward him.

Again Tony Collins cried out. Forgotten now was his automatic pistol. He attempted to gain his feet, clawed wildly at the air and went down. He felt himself strike upon the remaining boards of the shaft. They splintered, crackled, and gave way. He was falling.

He struck bottom with crushing force. But, in the single instant between his landing and the coming of unconsciousness, he had time to realize several things: first, that one of the wild burros he had noticed earlier had caused this present catastrophe; also, that he was a prisoner—and there was no water down here! Tony Collins had fallen into a dry prospect shaft.

He came to a long time later. Glancing about him, Collins perceived that he was lying upon blankets, and that somewhere off to his left a fire flickered cheerfully. As he attempted to move a groan forced itself from his lips; he felt as if he had been pounded with a club. Moreover, his hands and feet were firmly tied.

At his ejaculation of pain, steps sounded; and out of the red light of the fire came a figure. Tony Collins stared uncomprehendingly up. It was the form of a bow-legged old man—of Mike Boyd—that confronted him.

The other was speaking: "Quite some little celebration you had, son," he observed. "And all over nothing, as you might say! For you see, they wa'n't a thing in that chest, exceptin' some chunks of lead what I used to mould bullets out of. A trap, son—I kinda figgered you wa'n't no decent sort of person when I seen you throw a fit because I wouldn't let you drink all that cupful of water, and by the way you looked and acted suspiciouslike and shifty. So I hid my gold whar you wouldn't find it if you hunted a year. Then I hiked out to the gov'ment experimental station an' phoned the sheriff. He'll be waitin' at my cabin fer us—or fer you."

WYOMING'S "GREAT WALL"

EVERYBODY has heard of the Great Wall of China, but now Wyoming is to have a great wall of its own, the largest in the State. This wall is to be one thousand feet long and sixty-five feet high. It will parallel the huge earth dam of the United States reclamation service at Guernsey, Wyoming; and, by separating the dam from the spillway, it will save the dam from erosion.

Trouble Trail

By George Owen Baxter

Author of "Bad Man's Gulch," etc.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE FULL HOUSE.

I GOT him under the trees as fast as I could. There I felt pretty safe. I shoved one of my guns into its holster. I pulled out my skinning knife, and I flashed it in the shadow.

"There is two ways of keeping you silent, Little Joe," I told him; "and one of them is this!"

He said nothing. He was a game one.

"The other way," says I, "is chancier for me. It means tying you up and trusting to a gag to keep you still."

"Dickon," says Little Joe, "you ain't a murderer. You'll gimme my chance."

But his voice wasn't quite as sure as his words. He was scared, and he had a right to be; because just at that time the life of one of the crooks wouldn't of kept me thinking very long. However, you can't be too rough on a gent that trusts you. I stood over Joe while he cut his own coat to shreds, the way I told him to do; and, while I was tying him with those tough strips of cloth, I says, "How's things with you and the boys?"

"How would you guess them?" growled Joe.

"Bad," says I. "You need more elbow room than you got there."

"Bad," says he, "but how bad, you don't guess."

"What do you mean?" says I.

"You find out for yourself," says he. "I don't blab. Only, I hope you get that skunk, Grace!"

It sounded good to me, him talking like that. It was really as much as if he had told me a whole bookful of talk.

I simply said, "They've cleaned you out of your share of the loot, Joe, eh?"

He only grunted.

And so I gagged him, and I gagged him proper, so that he had just above a chance each way of choking to death or

getting enough air to breathe. Then I went on to the shack, and I peeped through the place that Joe had opened for himself to look in.

It was what I expected. There was a swirl of tobacco smoke and an old oil lamp leaning sidewise; and around the table there was Doctor Grace, sitting right facing the window, and on one side of him Lem Candy, and Dago Mendez on the other, and all of them looking set and hard. I mean, all except Grace, because nothing could of changed him. His mustaches was trimmed as neat as could be. And I couldn't help noticing how slick his hair was combed, and how elegant his necktie was with the diamond pin in it. He was a flash, was the Doctor.

He was dealing just now; and the glimmer of his hands was faster than you could follow, hardly. He had two cards in the air all the time, and in an instant he had dealt the round.

Dago Mendez threw down his cards. "Same thing!" he said. "The same thing!"

Doctor Grace says in his deep, soft voice: "You'd better take a breath of air, Mendez. You have no luck, to-night!"

Then Mendez started to say something in return, but just then a blast of wind hit me between the shoulders and knocked me forward against the shutters with a little crash. I was almost afraid to look through the peephole again, and I saw two of them on their feet. It was Grace, of course, that kept his place.

"Sit down, boys," he said. "It's only the wind."

It was one of the few mistakes that have ever been wrote down against the Doctor. The others sat down; but they still kept looking at the window now and then, for a minute or two.

"Those shutters'll blow right open, in a minute," said Mendez.

They would, too, if I hadn't held them. Because the bump of me against them had worked the fastening loose, and now the wind was like a steady hand pressing against them all the time.

"Let them blow," says Lem Candy. "Let them blow. Gimme three!"

He was holding up a pair, and I saw the Doctor keep up three. There wasn't very brisk bidding for a gang loaded with cash as they was. Yet even at that, I think there was ninety dollars on the table that the Doctor took in with three sevens.

He gathered in the coin, very thoughtful. Then he says: "Boys, you're not in a winning streak, to-night. What I say is, let's call off this game until to-morrow; and then——"

"Call it off until the luck has left you and come back to you again?" barked Lem Candy. "I guess not! We'll stick right here!"

I was surprised at Lem. Everybody knew that Candy was an intelligent sort of a gent, but you could see that the long hours of gambling had worn his nerves down fine. He was simply trembling while he sat there and looked the Doctor in the face with blazing eyes.

"All right," says the Doctor. "I can't stop the game while I'm winning; but, just the same, I think that if we got out and took a turn around the shack, it would do us all good."

You see what he was taking from them and what a light hand he was driving them with! Oh, he was a fox, that Grace.

"D'you feel your luck running out?" sneered Candy. "No, Doc. We'll sit right here. I've still got three thousand left, and the game doesn't stop till that's all gone!"

Three thousand left—and they'd taken how much apiece?

Why, even if you split a hundred and eighty thousand six ways and give three of them to the Doctor, that would leave thirty thousand apiece for the rest of the gang. And here was Candy, the

smartest of the lot, with only three thousand left.

I was plain surprised! You would think that the Doctor would never be such a fool as to trim his men of all of their coin. But from the way that Little Joe had talked, it looked as though he was even nearer to being broke than Candy; and Dago Mendez didn't seem much better off.

Oh, what a man that Doctor was, sitting so easy and quiet with murder on each side of him, and Little Joe, for all he knew, circulating around through the outside air, ready and willing to shoot through that same shutter at any time! Why, I wondered that such a set of nerves as the Doctor had could of been given to any one. But still he was as cool as a cucumber.

I could hear him say, in spite of another flurry of wind that almost dragged the shutters out of my grip:

"All right, boys. You shall have as much of this stuff as you want."

And out went the cards again, with a little smile on the lips of Grace as he dealt. But that smile told me a lot. He wasn't as steady as he seemed, or else he wouldn't have insulted that pair of thugs by seeming to smile to himself, like that. No, I could suddenly see that the Doctor was as tight as a violin string, in spite of his quiet. There was nothing but death in the air, as he flashed those cards across.

The fall of the cards seemed to be bad for Lem Candy. You could see that he aimed to throw down his hand, but he changed his mind, kept up one card, and drew to it. Of course, that was baby talk; and he got nothing, and he deserved nothing. He threw down his hand and leaned back in his chair, smoking a cigarette, with his eyes closed, and his face thrown far back. But, by the arching of his chest, you could see that every muscle in his body was tense and hard. A mean-looking critter was Lem Candy, just then!

Mendez had kept up two, and so had the Doctor. And when Mendez had made his draw, he turned his cards a bit as he arranged them, and I saw that he had filled out his pair of queens with three deuces! A very neat draw, that is. And, though it happens now and then, it sure is a sweet shock to fill from a measly little pair.

I looked to see Mendez bet fast, but he didn't. He just sneaked out five dollars. And the Doctor raised him right away, by ten. Back comes Mendez, covering the ten and raising it five more. Foxy, that Mendez was; and now I was so interested and excited in that game that I forgot why I was standing there, and I forgot that young Donaldson might be coming down from his house at any minute to see the fun. I was only hoping that Mendez could work up the stake to a rich one and then rake it in with his full house.

Well, he seemed to be managing it, pretty well. In another minute, him and the Doctor was raising each other back and forth, a hundred at a time. Easy money always goes like that in poker; and I suppose that any money is easy, when you've paid for it as they had.

Suddenly Mendez said, "I'd like nothing better than to keep on with this, Doc; but I'm done!" And he set his teeth until his jaw muscles bulged.

At that, forward rocks Lem Candy; and he slaps his wallet on the table. "There's three thousand that you're welcome to bet, Dago!" he says.

Of course, offering a loan like that right in the middle of the hand was like buying more chips at the same sort of a time. All against all the rules of the game, and Candy knew it; and, while he made his offer, he looked at Grace with his face all pinched and white with meanness. He had his right hand gripping the butt of a Colt so hard that his whole arm shook.

Mendez was watching the boss, too.

And I never seen two men look more like a couple of terriers about to run at a stray dog.

Why, Grace was wonderful about it. "You fellows can make your own rules to play by," says he. "I'm not going to interfere. Take Candy's money if you want to lose it, Mendez!"

And he smiled again. Gosh, how that made them twist in their chairs and show their teeth. I could guess that they had seen a good many of those quiet little contemptuous smiles, in the past few days. And they were filled with the poison of them right up to the lips.

However, right away that betting began again. Mendez used up the three thousands of his partner, a thousand at a crack, and every time that Candy saw one of his last thousands pushed out, he winced a little; but he stood the punishment, game enough. And always his eyes would flash over from face to face, trying to read them. You could read Mendez's, easy enough. He was red and swollen with meanness and eagerness to win; but the Doctor had nothing but that little mocking smile on his lips.

And then came the call!

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE BULLET THROUGH THE LAMP.

THE wind at that instant whacked against the shutters so hard that they were almost torn out of my fingers, and only by the tips was I able to keep them from flying open.

"You'd better look to those windows, Candy," says the Doctor.

"Confound the windows!" says Candy. "You been called! You been called! Let's see the color of your cards!"

"I think that I did the calling," said the Doctor, polite but icy. "We'll have a look at Mendez's cards; and all the time we'll remember that the men that are not betting are not in the game, Candy."

That was a slap fair in the face for Candy; and he looked wicked enough to jump at the throat of the Doctor, I can tell you. But he was too interested to stop even for a fight, much pleasure as it would of given him.

"All right," says Mendez. "This is what I had before the draw." He laid down the pair. "And this is what I did the betting on."

He laid down the three of a kind; and it made a pretty picture, that full house laying there under the shadow of the thousands and thousands that had been piled up in the middle of the table.

"Very good indeed," says the Doctor; and I thought what a good loser he was. "Very clever, indeed. But I think you'll find this better."

And dog-gone my soul if he didn't put down a straight flush of spades, as neat as ever you seen.

I saw it coming, almost before it was down on the board, as you might say; and I saw that this was the time to make trouble among them—now or never. If I put a bit of grit into that mill, it might wreck the fine machine just at this minute. So I let the shutters slip away from the grip of my fingers; and the wind, sliding through, flicked every one of those cards of the Doctor's right off the face of the table and rattled them against the farther wall.

"Well," says the Doctor, "I thank you for all of this money, boy, which you insisted on giving to me!" And he put out his hand for the stakes.

"Hold up!" snarled Lem Candy. "I didn't see what you had."

"I beg your pardon," said the Doctor, "but you were not in the game; and it was not necessary for me to show my cards to you. Mendez, however, saw that I had a straight flush of spades."

I thought for a minute that Mendez would never dare to face those

steady eyes of Grace and lie. But those were his last thousands on that table, as well as the last ones of Lem Candy.

He growled: "I seen nothing. The wind was too fast for me. Keep your hands off that money, Grace, or——"

Now, of course, nobody could take that. Not even Grace, though he had proved that he was a pretty patient man. It meant gun work, and it meant it so surely that I felt my own fire fingers itching. Mendez and Lem Candy saw what was coming in the same flash and went for their guns as though at a signal. But, before there was any steel out of leather, a gun boomed beneath the table; and Mendez screamed and grabbed his body with both his arms. He dropped out of his chair to the floor, and lay doubled up, screeching and kicking, very horrible.

Lem Candy was a flash faster with his Colt, and I always wondered why the Doctor held his fire for a while, unless it was because he thought that maybe Lem had too much sense to try to fight it out with him. When I say he held his fire, I mean that he didn't fire the second bullet for about a tenth of a second, until Lem's own gat flashed above the table. The wait of the Doctor didn't show so much in his gun as in his eyes, where I could see a shadow of thought flick across. Then he shot Lem through the heart; and Candy fell back, sending his own bullet through the ceiling.

The Doctor first gathered in the last stake on that table and dropped it into his pocket, saying "Poor Lem! Not quite enough intelligence, after all!"

And then—well, I hate to write it down. I've seen cruel things in my days, but never anything like that. Anyway, what he done next was to lean down and put his gun against the head of Mendez; and he pulled the trigger as I yelled—I couldn't help it—"You devil, Grace!"

And I raised my own gun to shoot. I was late. I should of fired, perhaps, instead of shouting. But, still, I couldn't help that. The Doctor dropped straight to the floor, and out of my sight; and, as he dropped, he sent his fourth bullet smashing through the lamp and left that room in darkness.

I heard a door crash. It was certainly toward the front of the shack and I rushed around that way to intercept him, but I was only in time to hear a sound of feet running from the rear of the building. It was just a child's trick, but it had worked as smooth as silk.

He had simply banged a door at the front of the shack; and, while I sprinted in that direction, he slipped through the other way. As I tore around in that new trail, I seen the shadow of a mounted man charge out of a shed that stood near, mounted on one horse and leading another. Well, him being what he was, he and his gang would have horses standing saddled night and day ready to hit the high spots in case of an alarm.

I raised my Colt and took the best aim that I could. I emptied it after him; but he was running his horses in a weaving course, and the only thing that I damaged was a few streaks of moonlight. Then he was gone out of sight behind the nearest trees, which he was heading for.

My thoughts spun around and around in a tangle. I didn't know which way to be turning. I thought of the nigger lying tied and gagged under the tree, and I thought of young Donaldson. It was queer that he didn't show up.

Why, there he was now—coming streaking along, with a gun glittering in his hand. There was no use in meeting him. I wanted no gun fights with gents that was supposed to be keeping the law. Besides, when he got to that shack, he would have enough on his hands to explain how they got there; though I supposed he would simply say that the gang must have taken posses-

sion of the shack for that night, without him or his brother knowing anything about it. Sometimes a slim lie will save a gent's neck from the penitentiary.

Anyway, I faded out in the direction of Cherry Pie. And, once I was in the saddle on her again, I knew what I wanted; and that was Grace—nothing but the Doctor. Even as I loosed the rein of Cherry, and she went bounding down the mountainside, I wondered how it was that he could possibly have got away from me. I had had him all those minutes under my gun. But still, when you're used to standing up and fighting in the open, it goes hard against the grain to have to shoot a gent that doesn't know that you're within miles of him.

I went down that mountainside, then, with all holds loosed. Until, a couple of minutes later, I saw that I was acting like a fool. For what could I do, riding like this, blind on a blind trail? I would be sure to miss him; or, even if I hit the right trail, he would hear me coming and wait with a rifle for me. And this moon was bright enough to make good rifle practice.

So I pulled up Cherry to a dogtrot; and, while she skimmed along soft and smooth, I worked the thing out in my head. What I finally arrived at was this conclusion: The best way to solve the riddle was to act the way that old Choctaw would of acted in the same place. And it seemed to me that what I should do was to stop the mare, get off of her, and sit down and plan the thing out with a map.

Maybe it seems foolish to you, seeing that seconds counted then, and that Doctor Grace, the smartest man that ever rode through the mountain desert, was streaking off ahead of me, with a change of horses, gaining distance with every breath.

However, what I did was to sit on the ground and draw a little map on a sandy place; and there I lighted a match because the moon wasn't clear enough to please me. I worked it all out and says to myself that the chief landmarks that counted was the pass back into Hooker Valley, and the way down the river that lay at the bottom of the slope where the Donaldson farm stood.

There was two ways of figuring it, from the viewpoint of Grace. If he went for Hooker Valley, where he was so known and hated, he would be laying himself open to the hardest sort of going, unless he got through before the daylight. But, at the same time, that would be all the less reason for me to try to head him off in that direction, if I were a quick guesser. But on the other hand, he knew that I wasn't altogether a fool; and, if I took a second thought, I might figure that he would do that very same hard thing and go straight for Hooker Valley, danger or no danger.

So, thinking that, wouldn't he just streak on down the river? It was the natural thing to do. It was the handy thing to do. And, if I tried to be clever, I would be riding hard for the Hooker Valley while he was heading in the opposite direction. I saw all of that, as I drew the map in. And it seemed to me that there was too much logic in a clever head like the Doctor's to take the Hooker Valley way.

So, a minute later, I was in the saddle on Cherry Pie and driving along the line of the river. He had a good start. And he knew right where he was going. And he had a change of horses, to keep shifting back and forth on, when one of them got tired. All that he didn't have was Cherry Pie. And I hoped that that lack would be enough.

Now that I had made up my mind to go down the river, I had a clear and simple goal. For down the stream there was one ford. It was fifty miles away, but between this point and the ford there was nothing but a rough trail laid

along the floor of a cañon, with sheer walls going up to the south and white water on the farther side. When he got to the ford, where the water spread itself out across a great big sand bar, he would naturally want to turn out of his course, perhaps, to the north; but up to that point, I could depend upon him driving straight.

So I rated my mare to make her run straight for that ford. She had lost a lot of time; she was working against two, and they would be carrying a lighter weight than her—but still I trusted to Cherry Pie. There was only one thing that made it bad—that I had to make that ride without really knowing whether or not the Doctor was scampering along ahead of me.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE DOCTOR SMILES.

I GOT Cherry Pie going in great shape. Fifty miles ain't a sprint. So I never used that long, raking gallop of hers at all. On the dead level, I let her canter. On the uphill, or the downhill, or weaving around through very broken rocks, her trot was good enough for me. And so she snaked the miles away from in front of her and threw them one by one behind her.

I had lightened away every ounce that I could. I kept one Colt and the Winchester, both loaded. More than that number of shots wouldn't be wanted. But once more all my pack and my spare guns and all of my extra ammunition, they lay along the trail behind me.

It was a terrible strain. Every time I saw a headland of rocks striking down from the cañon walls toward the river, I told myself that yonder was Doctor Grace, lying in wait, with his rifle cuddled against his shoulder. And every time I thought of that, I told myself that he would never waste time waiting for a gun fight that he could possibly avoid.

Three times, toward the end of the ride, I gave Cherry a breathing space and a swallow of water at the edge of the river, and sloshed the water up over her steaming body. And three times she went on again, a little lighter and fresher than before.

But all night long, she ran like a swallow flying. A dozen times my heart sank; and I told myself that I was a fool, sure, and that Grace was floating along through the fine, level roads of Hooker Valley, laughing at half-wits like me. A dozen times I looked at the little pricked ears of Cherry Pie, and talked to her, and told her that I loved her, and watched her shake her head and try to gallop faster against the pull of my reins.

The moon begun to get dirty and dull, after a long spell. I thought that I was getting tired and my eyes were going back on me; but, when I looked at my watch, I seen that it was near time for dawn. Yes, and pretty soon the light freshened until the moon was no more than a tuft of silver cloud in the sky that you had to look for twice before you could find her. And after that, she was blushing and rosy like the other clouds in the sky, while I turned around the elbow point of the last long down-grade; and there I seen the waters smooth themselves out enough to take the image of the sky; and there I saw, too, how Grace was driving on before me with his two horses at a trot.

How my heart jumped up into my throat! I had to thank something. I threw up my arms; and I raised my face to the sky; and I thanked Heaven.

There was not much left in the horses of the Doctor. I could tell that by the way that his rear nag hung back and pulled back on the lead rope; and I knew that he must be driving his spurs into his other beast, cruel deep.

I loosed the rein of Cherry; and oh, she answered like the blowing of wind—no effort, free as a treat. Why, she

just began to eat up those two horses in front.

I hoped that he wouldn't have any sign of me, but the nerves of that hound was set as fine as the best balance scales in a dentist shop. He twitched around in his saddle, all at once. And, when he seen me, I could see him look first to the river, and then to the cañon walls; and he knew that there was no hope for him there. If he wanted to get away, there was only the ford.

He turned loose the nag he was leading. He leaned over and began to jockey his horse with whip and spur; but, when he looked back, he could see the mare eating him up like a lion. I wondered why he didn't stop then and turn and make a fight of it. But it seemed that he was too set on chancing the ford. And then, we all knew that the Doctor never chanced a fight if he could possibly get away from it—just as he never failed to kill when there was a need of it.

The water broadened beside him. He didn't wait till he was flush with the smooth part of the ford, but he jumped from the side of the bank into the white water. I saw him dip out of view; and then he came in sight again, his horse trotting on the sand bar, and him turning dripping in the saddle, with his rifle ready to use on me.

Well, I checked Cherry Pie for one minute and covered him with my Winchester. I had a dead bead. It was only the pulling of a trigger; but somehow it was like murder, to kill him this way. And what I wanted was to fight it out with him, and pay, really pay, for what I turned over to the law. So I sent Cherry down at the ford, and she flew at it like a bird.

He fired back at me three times; and I didn't believe it possible for any man to shoot so straight and true at a moving target, when his own mount was floundering and jerking so terrible. But three times those bullets kissed the air right beside me, very mean and waspish; and three times I ducked my head at something that was already a thousand feet past me.

I think that the fourth time he would of split the difference of his other misses and nailed me; but just then his horse went down into a hole in the center of the ford, and, when it came up again, there was the Doctor clinging in the saddle, looking half drowned, and his rifle gone.

But Cherry Pie didn't stumble, neither did she falter; but she went on straight and true, a wonderful thing to see, and a more wonderful one to feel, with all of her fine body working and whipping along beneath the saddle at a great rate.

I needed comfort, then, closing in on a devil of a man like the Doctor. And so I sang out to Cherry Pie, and Cherry nickered back to me; and man, man, you wouldn't believe all the heart that it put into me. It was as if she was saying: "There ain't nothing to fear! He can't stand up to you!" I begun to feel that the horse knew me and knew what would happen. And the fear it run out of me; and it left my heart beating steady and swelling big.

Just close to the farther shore, the current deepened to swimming; and that was the reason that Grace couldn't turn and pick me off easy with his Colt, as I closed on him. He had his hands full, working away as he swam at the side of his mighty tired horse, which was barely making headway. But Cherry? Oh, I wish that you could of seen her head with a leap into the deep, fast current, and breast it, and beat it, and walk right up on the Doctor, while I trailed swimming at her side.

The roar of the river was in the ears of the Doctor. And he had his eyes strained forward to the bank, which was only a stroke or two away from him; and if he had any strength and attention left for other things, there was the

dying strength of his horse, which could hardly keep bobbing against the terrific current.

And so it happened, I guess, that the Doctor didn't have any glance for me until suddenly the head of Cherry Pie, dark with the wet and shining, come cutting through the river just above him. He turned on his back in the river, then, with a shout of surprise, as though he couldn't imagine what had happened to bring us up with him. Even the Doctor, you see, wasn't able to understand all that was in Cherry. I could have pistoled him then, dead easy. Instead, I simply gave him my fist on the point of the chin. Then I reached through the water and gathered him in and dragged him to the shore.

His own horse didn't have the strength to get more than its forelegs out of the stream; and there it stood half awash, its head down, and its eyes glassy, because Cherry had run the very heart out of it. The Doctor was still dead to the world, so I took a second to get the horse out of the water and to drag off its saddle and bridle, and whip a bit of the heavy water out of its hide, because it didn't have even enough energy to shake itself. But now the sun was coming with a rush, through rose and golden clouds; and pretty soon its good, honest warmth would begin to bring the life back to the Doctor's horse. I thought of that; and I was glad, because I aimed to ride him into town on his own horse.

He was still in a dead faint when I went through his clothes. I got a wallet and a money belt, both loaded and crowded with coin. And then I found a little notebook in his pocket, but when it chanced to fall open, I seen that it was interleaved with good paper currency, and all in big denominations. Why, he was crowded with money, that Doctor was. You couldn't touch him without coming away with a hundred dollars, or so. I didn't have to ask how much was here. I knew that he had on him the entire loot that he took from the Hooker Valley Bank, with the exception of what he might of paid to the Donaldsons for protection. And even the most of that price had mostly gone back into the pockets of the chief, from what I had gathered in the talk that I had overheard between the Donaldsons themselves.

Yes, it was a rich haul; and it would of tempted me a lot just to finish off the Doctor and go on with the stolen money in my pocket, if it hadn't been that I wanted something more than what coin could buy. A new start—a sort of a new soul was what I wanted.

And just then, the Doctor opened his eyes; and he smiled and sat up.

How would you expect that he would act? I hardly knew; but I expected something quick and deadly, because it didn't seem wrote on the books that I should be able to take the greatest of them all and bring him safe and sound into the hands of the law without some sort of a desperate fight.

But I tell you that the Doctor simply sat up and smiled. He said: "Well, Dickon, I've been dodging you for a long time; but now you've proved that I have to take you into full partnership, my friend. Perhaps as a senior member, because there isn't any doubt but that you've beaten me fair and square at my own game."

That was the way that he talked, as near as I can put it down, except that there was always something in the Doctor's way that was hard to describe and impossible to imitate. Even if you put in all of the words, you would be sure to leave out the most important part, which was what he was, himself. There he had been lying on the bank, looking like a ringer for a dead, drowned rat, one minute; and now with a flick of his hand to straighten back his hair and to put the right curve in his mustache, he was pretty close to as neat and easy as ever he could of been in the past.

CHAPTER XL.

A MAN'S SHADOW.

I ADMIRED the Doctor, and I couldn't help wonderin' over him a good deal. But, all the same, I knew that he was a hound.

I said: "Now, Grace, I don't want to be hard with you, now that you're down on your luck. I'm simply telling you that you're going in to town with me, and talking won't help you none."

"Tush, man," says the Doctor; and he even laughed at me. "I suppose that you mean you are going to take me in?"

"I mean just that," says I. And I said it in such a way that he couldn't help believing, in spite of himself.

He gaped at me because it hit him pretty hard. "I see," he says suddenly. "I'm the price that buys you off from the penitentiary sentence you've just escaped. If that triple-plated fool, Ops, had not let you get away——"

I thought that I might as well try my new lie on him; and so I said, "Before you start calling Wally Ops such a fool, you got to understand that it was him that set me loose by coming to an agreement that I would trail you until I caught you, and, failing of catching you, that I would come back and give myself up to the prison authorities."

The Doctor grinned at me and nodded. "That's likely," he said. "Come, come, man, you're not serious?"

"Am I not?" says I.

"Hold on," says the Doctor. "Then I suppose that you're going to bring me in and bring in all the money you took from me at the same time? You're going to turn over that grand fortune, my lad, when you take me back to the —er—impatient arms of the law?"

"You've read my mind," I told him.

It turned Grace pale. Because he could see all at once that I meant what I said. Still, he would try his hand once more.

He says: "What you haven't been quite able to understand, Larry Dickon, is that I propose to let you right in on the ground floor. You know that I'm the sort of a fellow who detests a lone hand and likes to have plenty of company around him. My great mistake was in associating myself with a group of murdering rascals who had nothing to recommend them except that they had no fear. Even with them, you'll have to admit, I went a long distance. But with you, Dickon, there would be no stopping me. Us, I mean! Because, what I couldn't accomplish, you would. Between us, the world would be our nut; and we would crack it open and eat as often as we pleased."

Why, to listen to him saying it, you could see a picture of the whole list of Broadway banks flying open and lying at our feet with their safe doors wide, and us able to take what we wanted, and when we wanted it.

But I just shook my head and smiled down at him. "It's all right, Doctor," I told him. "You mean it right. You figure that I got to have something up my sleeve. But that's where you slip. There ain't a thing. I haven't got a palmed deck, somewhere. I'm just a plain sort of a sucker, Grace; and luck and a fast horse has given me a hard hold on you, and I aim to keep that hold as long as I can."

Well, I thought that he would never have done staring at me. "Look here, my friend," says he at last, "there's a girl in this."

I nodded that there was.

He fell silent again. Then he said: "Tell me this. Did you open that window and let the storm in to upset the cards?"

I nodded again.

"I thought so," says the Doctor to himself. "You are a clever devil, in your own way, Dickon. But I haven't been able to figure out just what that way may be. As a crook, you're ridiculous. A poor scarecrow riding about

over the hills and getting nothing for your pains—nothing but a little space in the newspapers! But a fellow who can make a dicker with a man like Ops—get free—and then keep his agreement and give up two hundred thousand dollars! By gosh, Dickon, I have the clew to it! You've never been a crook at all. You're simply an honest man."

I grinned at him. "Thanks, Grace," said I. "That's the best compliment that I've ever received. We'll start rambling, though, if you don't mind. Your horse can walk along behind us, until it gets its second wind."

I tied his hands behind him and marched him down the valley until inside of an hour the sun was getting fairly high and fairly hot. Then I made up a snack for breakfast, and we had something to eat. After that, his horse was in shape for riding, again; so we went ahead in the saddles, his nag tied to the pommel of my saddle.

We rode, off and on, a little short of three days, keeping to the nakedest parts of the range; because, though I could have ridden in to Hooker Valley and given up Grace, I knew that there was about two chances out of three that those people would lynch the Doctor. I didn't want him murdered, much as I detested him. But it was a very hard march; and, during the whole time, I don't think that I closed my eyes once. You can't sleep when you have a tiger along with you, even when the tiger has its paws tied and wears a muzzle.

So, in the hot middle of an afternoon, we came out on the top of the hills and looked down on the town and the valley where Wally Ops had once been king of the roost. He was the under dog, now; but he would be something more of a king than ever, if I could only get my man in, safe and sound.

But, when I looked down at the last dusty miles of the trail, my brains spun around and turned black. I simply couldn't ride that little distance without falling out of the saddle. I had tried black coffee and black coffee until there was yellow spots before my eyes, but there wasn't strength in the stuff that would keep my eyes open any longer. All that I could do was to sleep. If only for two minutes, I had to sleep.

So I took my rope from the horn of the saddle; and I tied the Doctor to a tree, swathing him all around. His hands was tied behind him; his feet was tied in front of him; and I had him lashed to the tree trunk to keep him from rolling in any direction.

Then I stretched out in the shade of the next tree, lying flat on my back, with my arms throwed out to the sides. I closed my eyes, and set my teeth, and said: "Only two minutes. Fix that in your fool head, Dickon. In two minutes, you wake up and start for the town."

And then I was gone, as though somebody had slugged me on the head with a club.

They tell me that nurses have stayed awake for three days running, but then all that they have to do is to stay beside a bed, setting easy. But I had been riding hard through rough country those three days, and I was spent down to the last ounce of strength that was in me.

So I lay there, more than half dead; and hours went by like seconds. And, after a while, a dream came to me. And I seemed to see myself down into a deep, black well; and somebody was calling to me to get up out of it, because the water was rising—and that water was hot as boiled steel. It was creeping up over my feet, and over my knees, and over my body; and it had reached my chin, and my nose; and then it dazzled and burned against my eyes. But still I was too numb and weak to move.

That instant I opened my eyes again and found the slant, westering sun was

flaming against them; and the black shadow of a man was leaning over me and reaching a gun out of the holster at my hip. I was still too dazed to make out very much. But suddenly I knew that it was Grace, and that he had got himself loose from the bonds and was aiming to finish me off so he could take back the money, take Cherry Pie, and ride away to be free forever.

That jumped across my brain like lightning, and I grabbed for his hand and got it. I got his wrist, well enough; but I was still weak. He snatched his hand and his gun away from me with an oath; but by this time I was wide awake, and that little sleep I had had, had rested me and given me a wonderful lot of strength back.

I whipped myself over and threw my body at him, more like a snake than a human being, I suppose; and I struck the Colt up, just as he was firing. That bullet scraped across the top of my left shoulder. And the sting of it did me a lot of good. I slammed at the Doctor with my right hand, and back he staggered.

He was on his feet, getting his balance again; and I was on my feet snatching for my second gun, all in a second. And so it happened that each of us got a fair stand up chance to fight it out. That fighting lasted two seconds, I mean, two counts.

The first count was a .45 caliber slug from the Doctor's gun, meant for my heart, but aimed a bit low, because he was in too much of a hurry. Instead of going through the middle of me, it cut nice and neat through my thigh and knocked the pins out from under me with no trouble at all.

The second count was my own answering shot, as I fell. I intended that shot for the heart of the Doctor just as much as he had intended his for me. But the difference was that my aim was perfect. It was too perfect, because it hit his Colt on the way to his heart, and spent all of its force in knocking that gun back into his face and flooring him.

I crawled over and gathered in the fallen gun; and then, as the Doctor came to, I laid my back against the trunk of the tree where the frayed ropes was still lying that he had wore through against the rocks while I was asleep. I leaned against that tree, and I covered the Doctor with my two guns and made him put a tourniquet on my leg beneath the hip until the bleeding was stopped. And then I had him put on a bandage made of his own shirt.

Afterward, I was ready for the march in. But it was a terrible hard job. If you've never been without the use of one leg, you dunno how it damages you. And even when I got into the saddle, I was as sick as a dog with the pain of my leg against the saddle leather.

However, that was the way of it as we rode down the valley in the dusk, the Doctor ahead of me, with his head all the time turned back over his shoulder, waiting and waiting like a wolf for the time when my pain and my weakness would be too much for me, and I should faint. But before I fainted, I had made up my mind that I would kill him first.

It seemed a thousand years and a thousand, thousand miles. The world turned black. I thought it was faintness coming over me. Then I seen that it was simply the night on the world. And after that, a century or two of agony; and then here was the lights of the town.

CHAPTER XLI.

THREE MEN JAILED.

I THOUGHT, when we rode down into the deep dust of the village street, that the Doctor would swing around and try to get at me. And once there was a twitch of his shoulders that looked very much as though he meant business. But he changed his mind. He was long-sighted, was the Doctor, and why should he take any foolish chance

with my two Colts when there were still lawyers and plenty of money between him and hanging?

I suppose that that was the way that Grace figured it out; and he went into the town as meek as a lamb, until a gent come galloping by us at a rocking canter and seen me with two gats out herding a gent before me. And then, as he drew up, there was something that he recognized in the back of the head of the Doctor; but there was something more that he recognized in me.

And he yelled, as he pulled his gat: "It's Larry Dickon! Help!"

"You fool!" I yelled at him. "I'm Larry Dickon, but that's Grace. Which do you want the most?"

Grace was ready to sink spurs into his horse; but he seen that it was no use, because I was paying no attention to the new gent and was keeping both my cannon trained on the murderer ahead of me. I have never in my life shot a man in the back; but, if the thing had to be done, why, there was nobody that I would sooner of drilled than the Doctor —and he knew it.

However, that first gent that come up saved me a lot of trouble. He was one of these natural noise makers, and he had a crowd around us in no time.

"Dickon, surrender and drop that gun," he called to me, when he felt that he had enough backing.

"You wall-eyed Texas steer," I bawled back at him, "fetch the sheriff. I've come in to surrender to him."

"Are we gunna break open the jail in order to get the sheriff out and let you surrender to him?" says the other.

Get the sheriff out of jail! Why, that was a good deal of a blow for me; and, when I thought, somehow, of what that must of meant not only to the sheriff, but to his wife and his son and to Julie—with her head high in the air—why, it took my breath.

I think that there was a hundred or more armed men milling all around us as I went down that street, but none of them could quite make up their minds about what to do. When they looked at me and decided that they should jump me, then they seen Grace ahead of me. In a minute there was a yell:

"It's Dickon bringing in Grace. Bringing in Grace! And it was Dickon, then, that killed the other three."

"Shut up," I yelled at them, "and clear the way! I ain't nothing but the sheriff's agent! Get out of my way!"

Why, when they had made out exactly what was going on, they treated me like I was a king; and they herded around Grace; and some of them rushed ahead to get the jail open. And they did it, and they shouted as they started off that they would have the sheriff out to welcome us.

And all the time, as I rode along, gents was singing out at me, and hollering very loud, and telling me that I'd never regret the work that I was doing on this day. And another section was always hollering that they couldn't believe that any one man could ever of hunted down the whole Grace gang.

But here is where I've got to pause and explain the things, exactly as they happened, because a good deal more had occurred than just the capture of Grace.

When young Donaldson run up to the house where the two dead men lay, he was scared to death because he didn't know what to do in order to explain his having two dead men on the place.

Exactly what happened, then, I don't know; but what I've always guessed very free was that he called his brother in, and they talked the thing over. They decided that it would be foolish to try to get rid of the two bodies and cover the thing up. And then, when they looked around the place, they found Little Joe. And he knew all about what had happened, and he knew all about how the Donaldsons had sold out to his chief. So, to cut a long matter short, they must of pistoled poor Little Joe

about as heartlessly as any one was ever shot.

Because the report that come down to the town was that the Donaldsons had heard shooting, and that they had got to a shed in their place from which the sound came, and that there they had found three of the Grace gang dead. Who had killed them? It was figured that it was just a feud in the gang, and that the Doctor had murdered the rest of his men and gone away with all of the loot, which filled the mountains with men hunting for him.

But then, when I showed in town with the Doctor, they changed their minds; and all at once they gave me the credit for that triple killing. It was all over the range at once; and, though I denied it in public and in private and in print, still, that yarn keeps going the round. If you ask any old ranger what became of the Grace gang, he'll tell you, nine chances out of ten, that Larry Dickon killed Sandy Larson first in a knife fight, and that I shot Missouri Slim in getting away from the house of Ham Turner that night, and then that I followed up the gang and killed Little Joe and Lem Candy and Dago Mendez all in one battle.

But the fact is what I've wrote down here clear and plain, that I didn't do anything like that at all, and that all I did was to kill two out of the whole lot, outside of taking in the Doctor. Which was the hardest job of all.

I have stopped here and tried to straighten this thing out for the last time, and still I know that I'm talking in vain. And it makes me sick the way people will swallow a fool story just because it's an exciting one. It ain't the probable lies that go down, but the neat ones. And what is neater than to say that Larry Dickon started out after the Grace gang, and killed the five of them, one by one, and finally rode down Grace himself, and brought the Doctor in alive? So that when I ride into town, to-day, nine chances out of ten as I go into the post office, I'll hear one of the gents that are lazying near the door say, "There goes Dickon."

"Jiminy!" says a stranger. "Is that the gent that killed five of the Grace gang and brought in the Doctor?"

"Yes," says the other, "and what's more——"

It used to sort of please me, that sort of talk; but, when you get older, you want to be liked and praised not for what you might of been, but for what you really are. The facts count when you're over fifty.

However, I've been using up a lot of words right at the door of the jail, so to speak, with me and the Doctor riding through scores of mighty excited men that was only gradually getting the drift of what had happened. But enough of them had tumbled to the facts right off. And a dozen of them had gone rushing ahead. They beat open the doors of the jail. They kicked a couple of guards out of the way. They tore open the cell of the sheriff so savage that he thought that they was gunna take him out and lynch him. And when he was too proud to ask any questions, they dragged him out of his cell and down to the door of the jail; and he looked out and seen a swirl of excited, yelling men. Well, when there's enough folks around, it's hard to tell their happiness from their anger; and so the sheriff made up his mind that they had decided finally to really string him up to the first tree; and he took a last look at the brightness of the stars.

But just when he got that idea fixed in his head, a couple of happy maniacs on each side of him snatched him up and planted him on their shoulders; and they went whooping and yelling down the street, and dancing, and waving their hats, and everybody trying to crowd his shoulder under the sheriff, and hollering:

"Who called our sheriff a crook?

Wally, hey, Wally! We're gunna make you governor. We're gunna make you president. Who says that Larry Dickon bought his way out of jail?"

It was more exciting than you would ever of believed; and I couldn't help shaking a little bit, you understand, while I pressed up close behind the Doctor and urged him along through the gang. And then, here I seen the sheriff being carried right up to me. And you can bet that I didn't need any sunshine to see the brightness of his face, and how he took my hand. Why, it was enough to pay me back for everything that I had gone through in the past three days, no matter if they hung me the next moment.

But I managed to tell the sheriff that I was come back to give him the Doctor and to surrender myself up to the jail, again. Gosh, there was a mess of cheering and whooping and hollering, at that. They wouldn't have me in the jail. They would have me in the best dog-gone room in the hotel and stay there at the town costs as long as I pleased.

But they didn't reckon on the sheriff, at that.

He says: "Dickon is an escaped prisoner. I have been taken out of my cell by force. And the Doctor, I suppose, ought to have a cell, also. But into the jail we go, all three of us, and wait for the law to take us out or leave us in, in due course."

No matter what they said, he would have his way; and, when he pointed out that there had already been enough trouble over one illegal happening in that jail, you can bet that they hung their heads a good deal. And that was how it happened that we all went right up to the door of the jail; and it was there, when I tried to dismount, that they discovered that I was wounded.

Well, sir, that put a tin hat on everything. It is queer how blame ridiculous gents can be when enough of them get together and get excited about something. But nobody can tell how much worse everything is when the women get mixed up into it.

And, of course, there being a wounded man to take care of, that let the women in. It took about a dozen of them to assist the doctor in getting my trouser leg cut off and taking off the old tourniquet—with about half of the dozen fainting when they seen where the tourniquet had stopped the circulation in the thigh. And then them that fainted, they come to right away because they didn't want to miss anything. But if it had only been the men, why, I would just of been a pretty good plucky gent that had done a good turn by bringing in Grace. But the women, it was them that made me a hero.

CHAPTER XLII.

"I WON'T LEAVE YOU."

WELL, sir, it would be fine to be able to lean back and say honest that I seen through all the chatter then as plain and clear as I do through it now. But the honest fact of the matter is that I was so tickled that it sent the chills up and down my back; and the voices of them women, blubbering over me, and praising me, they plumb choked me with self-pity, which is about the most meltingest thing in the world.

And, on the whole, I suppose that there was never anybody that was so thoroughly mauled and hauled and patted and petted and admired as I was; until I half expected that I would fall to pieces—fall to pieces inside, I mean. Because it was terrible weakening, being made so much over. They talked so big about what I had done that it almost scared me to think of riding any little mountain trail at night, let alone racing it at the full speed of Cherry Pie. And when it come, after a few hours of this coddling, to thinking about ever having stood up to such a gent as Doc-

tor Grace, why, I felt as if I had stood up to a train in a butting match.

I'll give you an example to show how all around foolish everybody acted about me. The sheriff wouldn't let me out of that jail without the order from the governor pardoning me. And, by jiminy, if a lot of gents didn't tear down the bars away from the window of my cell, which was the extra-prime best cell in that jail. Yes, and they cheered as they jerked each bar away; and then they brought up Cherry. She stuck in her head and said how do you do to me, as fine and kind as you please; while all the women they stood around, and wept about it, and said how wonderful it was, and could there be any harm in a man that a horse loved so much?

Why, it was wonderful to hear how silly they was. I could of told them how his horses loved old Hank Jeffreys back in my home town, and how Hank was a prime wife beater and all the rest. But I didn't. I was getting a little too weak to do much talking because all of this excitement had settled in my head, and there was spells of dizziness that took me and whirled me a mile into the air and then let me down with a jerk.

But finally the doctor come alone, and sent all the women away, and hushed up the jail, and hushed up the folks in the street; and he give me something to drink that cooled me off a little. And so I slept.

I mean, I started to dreaming; and I dreamed for so long that pretty soon I got back to the last nightmare that I had had—the one about being down a well. Except that this time it was different. I was climbing up a long, shaky, swinging ladder; and up at the top of the well, there was Julie, bending over and smiling down at me. I kept working like mad to get up to her; but all the time that ladder kept slipping and slipping down, and the harder I worked, the more it kept slipping. And finally I began to holler: "Julie! Julie! I'm trying to get up; but you're so far above me that I can't get to you and——"

And here I woke up with my own voice ringing in my ears; and then I seen, what do you suppose? Why, that my hands had hold of the cool hands of Julie; and she was leaning over me and smiling.

"Julie," I said, "have I been swearing a lot?"

"Not a word," said Julie, "that I wasn't glad to hear. Are you feeling better, now?"

"I'm on top of the world," I told her. "Are you gunna be able to stay here a minute in case I should slip back down that well that I was dreaming about being down?"

"Hush," says Julie. "I understand. And I won't leave you."

"I'm slipping," I says to Julie. "I can feel myself dying, Julie, unless you hold onto me tight; will you?"

"I won't let you go, Larry," says she.

And she held me in her arms, and the black weakness fell away from me and left me as clear headed as a bell. And then I went to sleep in real earnest, and I didn't wake up again until nearly twenty-four hours later, when I come to myself; and what would you think that I seen? Why, it was the sheriff, sitting there smoking his pipe, very peaceful. And he winked at me and pointed. And there was Julie, sitting asleep in a chair right close to the head of my bed, looking tired, with dark circles around her eyes, but more beautiful than any other woman ever looked since the beginning of the world.

"You better send her home to bed," says I to the sheriff.

"Humph," says the sheriff, "I dunno that I seem to have any more influence over Julie. It ain't nothing but escaped crooks that she minds. Maybe you could send her home."

And he got up and stood at the window, and talked to Cherry, which didn't try to take a piece out of him just as

if she remembered how he'd helped save her life once.

But the minute that I so much as whispered to Julie, she woke up with a start and caught my hands. "Is it the dream again, Larry?" she says.

"The finest old dream that ever come over the pike," says I to her; "and I hope that I won't never have to wake up out of it, Julie. Y'understand? I sort of hope that it might be permanent!"

"Oh," says Julie, "you're not delirious, any longer!"

"I'm talking the best sense that I ever did in my life," I told her. "And what I mean, Julie——"

"There are people looking," says Julie. "You mustn't stare at me like that or what will they think?"

"They'll think that I love you, Julie. And let them think it, because it's true!" Then I reached out and got both her hands. "Tell me, Julie," says I. "Or would a clean shave help you to feel kinder about me?"

"You haven't touched a razor for a week," says Julie. "I can't say that you're a pretty outlaw, Larry. But you're the sort of a one that I like." And she leaned over, I tell you, with no less than about twenty reporters standing outside of the bars of my cell; and she kissed me, did Julie, in front of them all. Then she stood up, and she whirled around and faced them; and she says, "Don't you dare to put this in your papers or Larry will get you, one and all!"

And she went out from the cell, while they give her a cheer. At the door, she turned around; and she gave me a smile that they all could see—the sort of a smile that stayed with me for the rest of my life and made me happy.

Now, if you don't know by this time what a clean-shooting, honest-Injun, hundred-per-cent sort of a girl Julie was, I say, goodness pity you, because you'll never be able to know nothing about good women. But there wasn't a one of those reporters that didn't seem to know, and they all kowtowed to my Julie as she went out from the jail. And out in the street the boys cheered her again, which was the sweetest sort of music to my ears, you can believe!

The sheriff, he came back to me, then. "You seem to be able to handle her, son," says he, very gentle. "I hope that you're going to keep the upper hand all the way through, because she's always been too much for me."

"Send the reporters away first," says I.

"How can I?" says he. "I ain't been reinstated as sheriff."

"Don't talk like a fool, Wally," says I.

"Shut up," says Wally Ops. "This is something from the governor for you to read."

And he handed me a long telegram with the governor's name at the bottom of it, which said:

> I am glad to pardon Dickon hereby, but wish that you could let him escape once more to clean up the rest of the crooks in the State before he becomes an honest man.

"It means the end of the trail," says Wally Ops, when I had finished reading that telegram for the tenth time. "And the devil of it is, son, that this trail of yours ended without me having my hands on you."

He was a good, game one, was the sheriff; and, after that affair had cleared up and the smoke and the talking, as you might say, then there was nothing in the world that could of persuaded the gents in our county to vote for anybody but Wally Ops for sheriff. He had a sort of a strangle hold on the law and order in that section of the mountain desert.

Well, that was the way that the trailing of the Doctor ended up, that had started so many months before on the night when he stole Cherry Pie. And, as you might of noted, it was Cherry

Pie that had beat him in the wind-up. Because all the human brains in the world can't match up with a good horse.

CHAPTER XLIII.

CONCERNING THE DOCTOR.

LIFE on a farm, and sowing, and mowing, and reaping, and marrying, and having children, and house building, and such—well, they make good living; but they don't make good telling. I have noticed how most books end up with a marriage. The reason is that after a gent has got the right girl for himself, then there ain't anything for him to do except to be happy, and happiness ain't interesting to those that are outside the front door of your house. If it wasn't for panics, and murders, and robberies, and politicians, and such, newspapers would be terrible dull. So here is where I have got to stop talking about myself and say a little about Doctor Grace.

I feel, somehow, that I've been so busy talking about my own affairs, all of this time, that I never have been able to give the Doctor a square deal. Which I don't mean that he needed honest treatment, but more space and cleverer writing than I can manage. Because of all the gents that I ever met up with, the Doctor was the most smart, and the coolest head, and the steadiest hand. And all by myself I could never of beat him. It was Cherry Pie, as I said before, that turned the trick for me.

If I was able to follow on with what happened to the Doctor after I brought him to the jail, I could give you a clearer notion of the strength that was in him. In the first place, the papers was full of nothing except "outlaw, murderer, robber, brigand, assassin," and such names when they mentioned the Doctor. And everybody took it to be just a matter of course that he would be convicted quick and put out of the way with a rope around his neck.

But the Doctor had plenty of money stuck away in odd corners of the world; and he pulled some of it out to fight the law, now. He hired fine brains to help him make his fight; and the first thing you know, he had got a disagreement in the jury.

The papers put up a terrible yell; and there was another trial right away, and the second time they convicted him. But then they had an appeal. At the end of a year, there was still fighting and wrangling over that case; but it was no longer very interesting to folks in general. They sort of took it for granted that the Doctor would get what was coming to him, and they didn't care just when it happened.

It was while his second appeal was hanging in the air that he made a new move.

All the time after I brought him in, he had been a real model prisoner, so that the lady reporters which write up the "human interest" stuff for the papers always had columns and columns about him. His game was "repentance," which is always interesting for suckers to read about. He repented a terrible lot. And he told stories about how he had been led into crime. And all he wanted, he said, was a chance to get justice and to prove that of the bullets fired in Hookertown, none of his had done any killing. Just wounded a couple of gents, you see.

This was his game. And it seems that he sort of convinced his jailers, and they stopped watching him so extra careful as they had done at first. You can't be so hard on a gent that keeps on smiling for a year and a half, you know.

And so, when they got a little careless, he took the first good chance and sawed through two sets of bars, caved in the head of one guard, took the rifle from a second guard and left him for dead, climbed over the outer wall, and got away to where there was a car left

standing by the road, nobody knew by whom. And, at the rate of fifty miles an hour, that car rattled him off toward the mountains that he knew so well.

And that was the very last that was ever heard north of the Rio Grande about Doctor Grace.

A murderer, natural and plain and simple was what Doctor Grace was; but along with all of his faults he was brave, and I think that he could have been faithful, too—if he had ever found pals who would have kept their nerve and their heads through thick and thin. I've never had any doubt that, when I finally caught him, he was in earnest when he suggested that we team it together. And if he had found me without any thoughts of Julie in my mind, I suppose that I might of weakened and taken up with his offer.

In that case, by this time I might be a rich Don south of the Rio Grande. Or, maybe, I might be sleeping in my grave for these long years with the knife of somebody stuck between my shoulders. But I think that it wouldn't of been the knife of the Doctor. No, in a way I think that him and me was cut out for one another. He would of furnished the brains. And I would of furnished a scrap of decency that he lacked. But, by the time that we met, he was a little too far gone one way, and I was too far gone in love another. And we never could go back and start together.

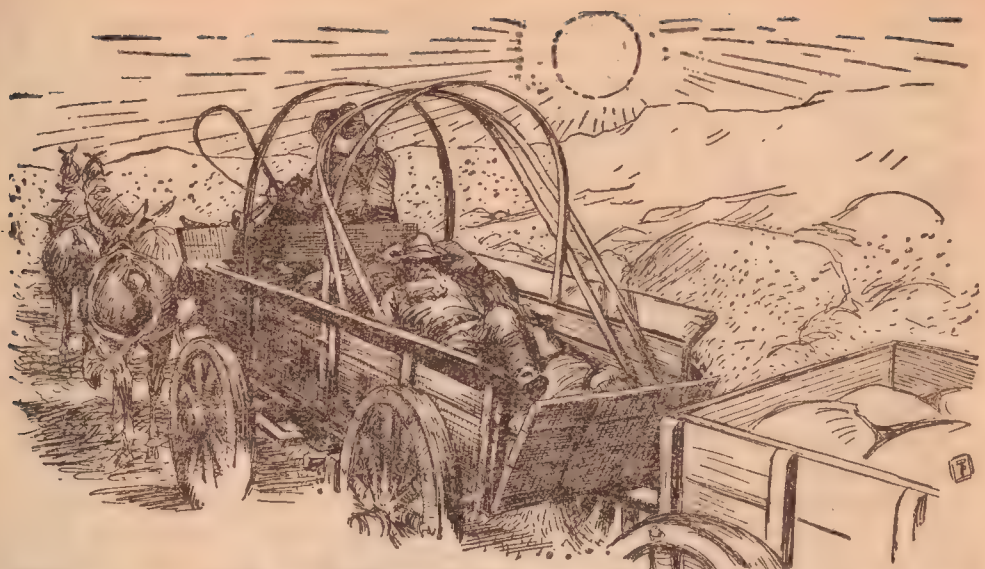
However, I'm glad that Grace got away. He was meant for a bad end, but I don't think that he was meant for a rope.

And my favorite dream, by night, is of how the Doctor sat in the cabin at that poker game, so cool and so steady, with a killer on each side of him, and how he handled all the breaks of the game and the situation when it looked the blackest for him. And I notice that when that dream wakes me up, it always wakes me up smiling.

THE END.

ADJUSTING YOSEMITE BOUNDARIES

THE commission which visited Yosemite National Park during the summer with a view to adjusting the southern boundaries of that famous national playground were obliged to abandon luxurious journeying and go back to the primitive methods of trail travel for a period of about eight days. The commission, headed by Congressman Henry W. Temple, of Pennsylvania, went on horseback to the region they were to investigate, known as the "Devil's Post Pile Country." The trip led over rocky trails, scarred by the ruts and sump holes of old mine workings. The purpose of the trip was to decide whether the region would be better left as a mineral reserve or reannexed to the national park area. This section of the Yosemite was separated from the park in 1905, owing to the number of mining claims that had been located there. The mining operations lagged in course of time, however, and a number of persons who wanted the Devil's Post Pile district preserved for its natural wilderness magnificence, petitioned the government to restore it as a part of the Yosemite National Park.



Death Valley's Ghost

By Austin Hall

Author of "Balked in Burning Basins," etc.

THE morning sun had just tipped the rim of the desert when old "Death Valley" Tom kicked down the last bar of the corral and led the long team—fourteen mules—out into the open space that bordered the railroad. The town of Wagonwheel, fretful in the coming heat, had just begun to awaken; but old Tom had been up for an hour. The mules had been fed and watered, the harness buckled, and everything was set for the six days' trip. Now all he had to do was to hook the butt chains at the wagons, rearrange the load for the last time, and sing out his familiar "Yaaou!" Then would come the starting, the creak of the heavy wheels, and the roll out into the desert. Already the day gave signs of the blistering scorching that was to come. Old Tom looked up at the sky; and he bit off a mighty chew.

"Goin' to be a humdinger," he said to himself. "I knows this 'ere old desert like a book. I sure wouldn't want to be one of them tenderfeet and have to tread out there on a day like this."

Whereat he swung the team so that every last mule was a straddle of the long chain and in his own particular and designated place. He had just hooked the last butt and was snapping a check when the sun-baked station agent came to the edge of the platform, holding a pencil in his hand, ready to take a last listing of the freight. The railroad man watched Old Tom quizzically for an instant; then he thought of something.

"Old Tom," he called. "Did you know that the sheriff was in town? He came in last night and told me to be sure and tell you that he wanted to see you. I don't know whether it's bandits or cutthroats or robbery or what, but it's something."

Out of the hotel beyond the dusty street came the sound of another voice as if in echo to the station agent's announcement. "Yeah, sheriff," called the proprietor, "that's old Death Valley Tom over there now. Sure he's starting early. Him and his mules ain't got a bit of use for a thing in the world except to travel. If you want to speak to him, you'd better hurry."

The old man had not said a word because with the news coming from two directions he did not have to; he merely snapped the check, passed in behind the leaders, and stepped back to the wagon, from which, as he climbed up, he caught sight of the sheriff crossing the street. The officer was stubby, deliberate, but apparently in a hurry.

"Eh, Tom," he spoke. "Dang it all, it was a good thing I got that fellow's call. I was sleeping like a log. Been ridin' all day yesterday; and so, when I got in last night, I didn't hunt you up. I just left word."

But the day's work having started for Death Valley Tom, he went on with his labor, fully determined that he would not stop for the sheriff or anybody else. He had climbed the lead wagon and was already busy shifting the sacks around in the way that he always did when he was going out with a medium load.

"Yep," he answered. "Well, sheriff, I'm a pretty busy hombre right now. If you've got anything important or want anybody shot or anything like that, you'd better say so now. Mebbe I kin help you, and then again mebbe I can't. Still——"

He began dragging a heavy sack, putting his old body under it and shifting it to the top of the pile. The sheriff watched the sack moving slowly into place, all the while wondering subconsicously at the novel notion of the old man's loading.

"It ain't trouble that I want to speak to you about this time, Tom," the sheriff spoke. "And it ain't shooting, either. Leastways it ain't yet. What I'm a looking for this morning is information. What I wants to know is what's become of old "Long Whisker" Bill. You know the fellow I mean, don't you?"

The old man was patting a sack and reaching for another. "Sure," he answered without stopping. "Everybody knows old Long Whisker. He's been in this 'ere ole desert for forty years; he was a old man when I was a kid. What's he done?"

The officer had passed up a cigar, and the old man had taken it, smelled it, and tucked it into his shirt—his action making it plain that he was not taking kindly to the other's questions. Long Whisker was a character and a good one. The sheriff knew it.

"Oh, don't get rangtangerous about it, Tom," the latter spoke. "He ain't done a thing. It's what's been done to him that I'm afraid of. You see, there ain't no one seen that old prospector for months and months. Which ain't nothin' in itself, only Long Whisker is a-getting old; and lately there's been some mighty tough characters running loose in them there mountains. Seems as though those fellers gets tougher and tougher all the time; and the faster I herd them into jail, the more other ones come out to take their place. The last seen of old Long Whisker he was headed west from this town of Wagonwheel; and they tell me that you ought to know where he went to."

"Yep," answered the old skinner still working. "And that's about right, too, but I an't a-tellin' no one unless I knows his reason. What is it?"

The sheriff took the old man's loyalty good-naturedly. "Well," he answered, "it's this way. That old prospector has got relations. I didn't know it, and you didn't know it, and neither did anybody else; but it's a fact just the same. There's a young lady at the county seat

what says that she's his granddaughter, and she's a peach if you ever seen one. Kind of a funny case! Says she was raised as an orphan, and all her life she's had a notion that she didn't have a soul on earth who was related to her. They'd taken her as a kid, and they'd kept it from her; and then, when she gets grown up, she started out hunting and found out the facts. Naturally, she's dead anxious to find him. So'm I, because Tom, it'll be a pleasant sight to see them come together."

That made it a different matter with the old teamster. He was still swinging sacks, shifting them around to make a hole behind the box seat of the lead wagon; when he was through he stopped and scratched his head.

"I see," he said. "Well, sheriff, when I seen old Whiskers the last time he was heading up into the Sierba Mountains. That was—let's see—about ten months ago. He was walking along with a burro. He had two, but one of them died; and he allowed to me that now that his burros was passing out, it was about time for him to follow suit. Said he had a hunch on them 'ere hills. They're as dry as dust, but he allus was a demon on finding water. He camped with me one night, and then the next day he left me. Said he would make one more strike. I ain't seen him since. If you want to pick him up, you'll have to head out that way."

"Thanks," came the answer. "I will. I'll be going out to-day or to-morrow. And I want you to keep your eyes peeled. By the way, Tom, what's the idea of that kind of loading. Looks like a bed."

"It is," answered the old man," just exactly what it is. You see, sheriff, I have to camp two nights in the rattlesnake country up there, and it's a whole lot nicer to sleep high up than to have one o 'them pesky varmints a-crawling into your blankets."

He had crawled down, mounted his wheeler, and called, "Yaouu! Yip you, Beck!" the words coming out like the pop of a black snake. The next instant the big team had picked up the traces, and the long chain was taut. Old Death Valley was on his way.

Out in the desert, what with the monotony, the ceaseless plod, plod of the fourteen mules, and the hanging pall of dust, the old man had plenty of time to think. He was a skinner of the old school, and so, while he had been loading, he had had little to say. But it was different in the saddle. He bit off a chew and looked at the mountains that stretched ahead—mountains that many brave men had fought, but which, somehow, had a way of baffling all but the most hardy of prospectors. He had known Long Whisker ever since he could remember; and we was sure that old fellow would have nothing to fear from the desert. It was the prospect of his being picked up by bandits that he was afraid of. And the sheriff had said that the old man had a relation! He was wondering if the old man knew. Ten months! The old fellow ought to be coming out pretty soon. Perhaps he had struck it as rich as he had prophesied. And if he had—well, it would be just wonderful, dang it! They couldn't be anything nicer than a man coming out in his old age to find a girl like that. He almost wished he had one himself.

Hour by hour, the wagons creaked behind the long team, rumbling, chucking over the holes and working ceaselessly toward the region of desolation that lay just ahead. On the second day he crossed over a ridge, swung up a dry creek bed, and approached a line of cottonwoods. The mountains, jeweled with sparkling gypsum, were blazing in the sun; while in the hollows the heat hung like a death pallor that drove every living thing to the shelter of the crevices among the soil and rocks. Just ahead was the cañon that led into

the Sierba Mountains—the very place where old Tom had last seen Long Whiskers and his burro.

Death Valley was thinking about it when he saw something bob away from a rocky bluff that lay to the right of the road. The thing had a strange form and was humped, ragged, and dirty. It came limping; and then, as suddenly, it dropped down as if exhausted. He saw a hand go up—a hand that seemed to cry out what no lips could utter. Old Tom jumped off his mule and ran over just in time to see the body twist, and fall, and then turn over. Thirst, heat, starvation, and murder! All these things ran through Death Valley's mind; and all the time every thought was focused upon the one thing that he was sure of.

Long Whisker had come back! Yes, it was Long Whisker—the old prospector! Tom saw the matted hair, the expression of the face, the torn clothing; and he knew just what had happened. With one hand Tom lifted up the old fellow's head, and with the other he held up the water bag, at the same time watching the look on the worn face. The old fellow was breathing but scarcely more; his tongue was thick; when his eyes opened they had a rolling look. Tom wondered how Long Whisker could have made any move toward the wagon; drop by drop Tom moistened the man's tongue then bathed the sick man's face. After an hour's work Death Valley had his patient on his feet, but even then he would not let him talk until he had reached the wagons. Then and not until then did Tom get the other's story.

Long Whisker had been coming out of the Sierbas, he said. All had gone well, and he had the old burro laden down with gold—as much as a man could carry, enough, in fact, to last him the rest of his life—when he had run across a stranger a few miles from the desert trail to Wagonwheel. The young fellow had been thirsty and wanted a drink; and, though there was but little in the canteen, the old man had let him have it because, as he said, he himself was used to thirst and could get along without. They had eaten together and camped, but during the night the fellow had found out what was in the packs on the burro's back.

Next morning the stranger had been very affable, so kind and attentive, in fact, that Long Whisker had begun to suspect, but the younger man did not act until the prospector, weakened from the lack of water, had stumbled and fallen. Then he had swung with a rock, knocked the old man on the head, taken his gun, and left him for dead.

When Long Whisker had come to, he was alone. He had managed to go on through sheer grit until, in some way, he had reached the Wagonwheel Trail. A long time after that he had heard Death Valley's team, had tried to get to the wagon, but could not make it. That was all. It was tough luck; he had seen some that was a whole lot worse; but he was an old man now, and he could not stand as much as he could when he was a few years younger. Naturally he had hated to lose the gold. Guess he would have to go to the poorhouse or just die. He didn't care which.

Old Tom had started the team up again, but first he had put the old prospector to rest in the makeshift bed behind the box seat. He did not say much because he realized that too much talking just then was dangerous. He had examined the wound and made sure that it was not serious; but, like the other, he hated the idea of letting the bandit get away with the treasure. No doubt, the thieving rascal had gone on, and had either made his way to the town of Wagonwheel or else gone on in the other direction.

Death Valley sat in his saddle and tried to figure the thing out. The team went plodding along up the grade, step

by step, each mule with his tugs taut, sometimes one mule over the chain, sometimes two, depending upon the bend and the difficulty in making it. The mountains began to rise sheer and terrible, hot with reflected heat; it was heat that would have balked any, except one of Death Valley Tom's experience. Higher and higher they went, and then down into a swale where the sun's rays were dancing like the heat in an oven.

Old Tom was wondering how he could break the news to the old man in the wagon—wondering whether the old fellow knew that he had a relative or kin of any kind. At last he could stand it no longer! so he climbed off the wheeler and mounted the box seat. Long Whisker was sitting still, his head propped in his hand, breathing easily. The matter in question was a delicate subject, but old Tom broke right into it.

"Seems to me, Long Whisker," he spoke, "that you an' me had ought to get acquainted. I've known you nigh onto fifty year, and you an' me don't know any more about each other than that you're Long Whisker Billy, the prospector, and I'm Death Valley Tom, the mule skinner. What I mean, Billy, is, was you ever married? Because if you was, I've got something to tell you."

The injured old prospector had been sitting up peacefully; but at the abrupt question from the other his eyes seemed to focus—and to fill with a strange look. He raised his hand as if to ward off something that came out of his memory.

"Yeh!" he answered. "Yeh! Married? Allus every man thinks o' that. Married? Yeh! Sure I was. But it's so long ago that I've made her a blank. Of course! And that was why I come into the desert. They wasn't no one but her. I come here to make a fortune. Then my wife died, but I kept on so as to make a stake for my daughter. But she died, too. She had a baby; but, when I went down to the city, they said that she was gone, too. I wanted to take my grandchild and raise her, but they said that she had passed away like her mother.

"Seems as though I was a tough-looking customer when I went down that time, and the people that I talked to didn't like to have me around. I tried, and I didn't know what to do. I had lived up here looking for gold so long that I didn't look like people who lived in the city; and, when I found that there was nothing left for me, I came back here and became Long Whisker Bill. I been a-roaming ever since. It's awful lonesome not having a thing to live for. I've often thought at night, Tom, what I'd a done had there been a baby. But it ain't no use, Tom. I ain't nothin' but a old desert rat what's bound fer the poorhouse. Why do you ask?"

It seemed to suddenly dawn upon the old fellow that he had told something that he had held back for years; but, when he looked up at old Death Valley, he could see that Tom had had a very good reason for asking. It was in Death Valley's face.

"Yeah," said Tom, "but you ain't bound for the poorhouse, Billy. Understand? I got your story now, and it jus' tabs up with what I thought. You see, Billy, you was mistaken about that baby. She warn't dead, and they was just hidin' her from you. I know, because she's down to the county seat right now. Seems as though she got old enough to look things up after while, and she's found out. She's as pretty as a peach; and she's got the sheriff and everybody else, even me, a-looking fer you. She wants you to come down with her, and live, and be happy, and—— Well, your gold ain't necessary, and it don't amount to very much, anyway, because I've got a lot of that stuff back in that 'ere trailer. And

it's yours, Billy, 'cause I ain't got no use fer it. I wish I was in your fix. But some day I'm a-coming down to see you."

In all Death Valley's experience he had never seen anything like it. He had known men, apparently dead, come to life, but he had never seen a man grow younger. Old Long Whisker had suddenly straightened up; the look of despair had vanished; his eyes were clear.

"By swan!" he exclaimed. "You don't say? An' she's alive, Tom, you are sure? She's alive! I kin do what I started to do—yet. I knows where there's a lot of gold, Tom—lots of it. And I'm a-going back, and I'm a-going to get it. Why, dang my hide, I ain't only a young man yet! I got years and years. I——"

But just at that moment the old teamster turned around to check up on the meaning of a commotion among his leaders. One of the animals was sidestepping, and that was a sure sign that something was up. A certain warning instinct caused him to seize the tarpaulin and throw it back over the load and over the impromptu bed where Long Whisker was resting. And it was well that he did so, because at the very next bend he came across a figure standing by the roadside. Tom knew immediately what had happened.

"Whoa!" he called; and the long team stopped. "Well?" he spoke to the stranger. "You look thirsty. Where'd you come from?"

That the fellow was just that, was proven by the avidity with which he attacked the water bag. He drank and drank; and, while he was drinking, old Death Valley had ample time to size him up. He was a young man just as Long Whisker had described, and he carried a sack of great weight. Tom had no doubt but what he was one of the men of whom the sheriff had spoken, and that he was just as tough as his looks. When the water was drunk, the young thug passed back the sack without so much as a "Thank you."

"Yeh," said the young fellow. "Well, now I guess I'll ride. I'll get up on that seat there. And I guess I'll ride clear through. Savvy?"

Old Death Valley, accustomed as he was to quick thinking, had sized things up to a dot; he was glad that the fellow was going to sit on the box. Fine! In just two seconds he had thought out the prettiest little solution in all his experience. He got down from his mule and became the humble, frightened old teamster, which down in his heart he certainly was far from being.

"Sure," he spoke for all the world as if he were scared to death. "Sure, mister. You kin ride. That's it. And if you wants to, you kin put that 'ere gold right in that 'ere box. It'll ride easy that way, you know, and it won't roll off. Here, let me help you."

He held the lid up, well knowing that not for the world would the rascally bandit let him get his hands on the treasure but secretly glad that it gave him a chance to fumble in the box. He made a move to take the bag, but the fellow shoved him off.

"Not on your life," he said. "I take care o' that stuff. See? You get back to your saddle and tend to your onions. I'm the boss now."

At the same time he closed the lid, sat down upon it, and began to roll a cigarette. Old Tom had won every point and was in just the position that he wanted to be; he cracked his whip and yelled at the leaders to divert the other's attention and to keep him in good humor. When the time came and he could do it without seeming strained, he began asking questions. Twice he picked out boulders in the road and sent the big wagon, bumpity, bump, over them. The newcomer hung on his seat, little knowing what was up.

"Been mining, eh?" asked old Death Valley as a starter. "Have any luck?"

Now that the thug had had a drink and a smoke he was in a better humor. Besides, there was nothing in the question to arouse suspicion.

"Sure," he answered. "What do you suppose? Think some one gave me that gold. I been mining up in the Sierbas. Had a fine claim and thought I'd bring that stuff down and get me a new grubstake. Lost my burro a few miles back, so I had to walk on to this here trail. But I wasn't scared because I knew you'd be along some time to-day."

Old Tom lit his pipe; he had a scheme, but he did not know just how it would work.

"Up in the Sierbas," he said at length. "Well, that's funny. Did you say you was up in the Sierbas. I wonder——"

"What you wondering about? Sure I was up there. What's funny about that?"

"Nothing," said Tom. "There ain't nothing funny at all about it, Bobby, only them 'ere mountains is haunted. Course I don't believe it, but I've heard the story. Not only that, but I've seen some men what swears it's true. Ever hear the story?"

The other grunted. "I ain't interested in ghosts," said he. "But if you got a story go ahead. It'll pass away the time. I'll roll another smoke and listen. All right. Shoot."

"Well," said the teamster. "It ain't a story—leastways it ain't the way I tell it. All I knows is what they tell me. The way I get it, they was once, way back about sixty years ago, an old man murdered up in them 'ere mountains. He was old—about seventy years of age, and he was coming out of them mountains with a burro or two all packed with gold. He'd been in so long that he was all covered with whiskers—so much so that you couldn't only see his eyes. Seems as though some bandits or crooks met up with him and asked him fer a drink, camped with him, or something, and then popped him on the head. I don't know whether they got away with the ore or not, but that is the start of that 'ere ghost that they tell of. I've heard it lots of times.

"They say that the old fellow is still up there. They say that on certain days he's coming out at exactly the same place with one, sometimes two, burros. And he's allus a-packing gold. And he's allus ready to be robbed. And they say he's got it down so pat that he knows just when to stoop down to let the crooks take a crack at his head. They're dead sure that he's the real thing and that the gold is natural. And they don't find out until they put the stuff away and then start to look fer it. Then they wake up, because, of course, that gold is only a ghost. When they go to look fer it, it's gone. Just like that. Funny part is they believe fer days and days that they've been robbed; that is, until they hear the story from some one else and tab it up with their own experience."

That was all. Old Tom deliberately ran over another stone and waited for an answer. The jolting of the wagon had shot the bandit off the box and down on the doubletrees. He was balancing himself with one foot on each end of the evener. The lid had bounced down into the box seat. And just then the bandit looked in. The gold was gone—all in a second, with old Death Valley looking back out of the corner of his eye!

"You old crook!" the bandit was yelling. "Where's that gold? Ghosts! Don't try any of your hocus-pocus on me!"

He had whipped out his .45 and was getting ready to shoot. He was the maddest bandit that ever lived. Old Tom was still looking, but now he was seeing something else. The bandit was holding a leveled gun, but right above and behind him was old Long Whisker

Bill swinging that bag of gold. The weight landed with a thud. The bandit dropped to the ground. In a second Death Valley Tom was off his mule, and the old prospector was out of the wagon.

"Yeah!" Long Whisker Bill was yelling. "You don't believe in that 'ere ghost, eh? Well, I'm that 'ere ghost hisself. See? How about it? Now we've got your gun, and we'll take you in. Ain't I a nice old ghost? And I've got the gold. Yessir! And as soon as I gets in town I'm a-going to take it straight to the girl that it belongs to."

Several days later Death Valley was talking to the sheriff. He had been present at the reunion of the old man and his granddaughter. Of course he had to tell the officer what had happened.

"Oh!" he was saying. "It wasn't much. You see, I didn't expect the fellow to believe the story, naturally, but I did know that old Long Whisker would be listening. And I knew that after learning that his kid was alive his wits would be working overtime. So I told the story and reached the part where the ore always disappeared. And all the while I was running over rocks to jar off the loose boards in the back of the box. Old Long Whisker caught onto my game, so he just reached in and took the whole sack. About that time I ran over a whopping big boulder, and the shock sent the crook out onto the doubletrees. He saw that the gold was gone, and he started to drill me, but Long Whisker was too quick fer him. It wasn't much after all. It was just something that happened."

COLORADO RANGE WAR AVERTED

A THREATENED war over the use of the range in northwestern Colorado between sheep owners and cattlemen was averted a little while ago through intervention of representatives of the department of the interior. The trouble, which centered in Garfield and Rio Blanco Counties, grew out of the invasion of this grazing area by sheep owners. Obtaining leases for grazing privileges upon eighteen thousand acres of land from persons holding oil shale placer mining claims, the sheep owners commenced to graze their flocks on these lands.

As the cattlemen had been accustomed to use this region as a range for their cattle, resentment immediately developed. The cattlemen claimed that the sheep were eating the grass too close and otherwise destroying the range. There were threats of violence.

An appeal was then made to the secretary of the interior, who issued instructions that a representative of the department be sent to the scene of impending hostilities. After holding a number of meetings with the sheepmen and cattlemen in which he acted as a mediator, a written agreement was finally signed between the contending factions.

Through this agreement, the disputed range was partitioned between the cattlemen and the sheepmen. Its terms provided for the setting aside of a specific area for the herding of between four and five thousand sheep. The remainder of the region is to be used by the cattlemen in grazing their cattle. Under the terms of the agreement, the cattlemen and the sheepmen have consented not to disturb or interfere with one another in the use of the range allotted to them.

Your Dog

By David Post

Author of "The Chihuahua," etc.

THE PAPILLON

AMONG the latest of the toy breeds to be seen in the United States is the Papillon, or butterfly dog. In shape and position on the head the ears of the Papillon are suggestive of the wings of a butterfly; this fact accounts for the name given the dog. This toy variety has been popular in France and England for some time among ladies of fashion; it has not made very much progress in public favor in this country up to the present. No doubt the time is not far distant when it will vie in popularity with the Pomeranian and the Pekingese; for it is intelligent, quiet as compared with some of the other toys, and of fairly even temper. It does not quarrel readily with other dogs but will fight gamely if provoked to defend itself.

It is an old breed, perhaps of Spanish or of Mexican origin; it seems to have come to public notice first in Spain, but it may have been taken to that country from Mexico by early Spanish explorers. Artists of the early nineteenth century included the Papillon as an accessory in their paintings of court ladies of France and Spain. Small and decorative, the Papillon gives an added distinction to the woman who carries or leads it.

Four pounds is the average weight; and nine inches at the shoulder the average height of this diminutive breed. The color may be ruby, red mahogany, reddish chestnut, dark yellow, black and white, or white with patches of any of these colors. Its head is small, with a dome-shaped skull, round, dark, low-set eyes, erect ears, and pointed nose. The back is straight and moderately short; the tail is long, bushy, and curved gracefully over the back. The legs are short, slender, and straight. While the hair on the face and front of the legs is short, it is long and abundant elsewhere; its texture is silky.

Strangers will not find this breed very friendly; persons who have intimate knowledge of the papillon, however, report it companionable, lively, alert, and intelligent.

We have completed now our survey of the toy breeds. You who love dogs that help men to carry their burdens will be glad to turn from the tiny papillon to the sturdy Samoyed, the shepherd and sledge dog of northern Russia and Siberia.

The Bandy-legged Little Hombre

By

Howard E. Morgan

Author of "The Capture of Denver Red," etc.

HOPPING the sandy ridge wall, "Dad" Wallace squintingly inspected the vast gold-green checkerboard of semi-open country spread out below him. At the bottom of the fifty-foot gravelly bank on which he stood, a serpentine roadway twisted through the valley, its sandy surface shimmering goldenly in the midday sun. So crooked was this mountain road that scarcely a hundred yards of it was discernible in any single straightaway span even from the eminence on which the old man stood. Dad mopped his leathery face with a huge bandanna handkerchief and whistled tunelessly through his teeth.

"Wal, thars a road, anyways. Gittin' nigh t' somewhere, I be. It's about time. Never did know Arizony was sech a sizable place. An' them hills looks promisin'."

He peered speculatively across the sunlit valley toward three purple peaks, rearing stark against the saffron sky; and, in the gray eyes there was a never-failing gleam of hope. This was new country to Dad Wallace. Reluctantly, he had left the Corinthian Hills, a hundred miles to the east, which for thirty years had been his stamping grounds. Here, in the foothills of the La Gardia Range he intended trying his luck, once more, in search for that elusive will-o'-the-wisp, gold. He didn't know exactly where he was, but there should be a town at the end of that road. He would accost the first passer-by. He needed supplies badly. His keen eyes searched the gravelly wall for a trail leading downward.

Suddenly the muffled pound of hoof-beats sounded. Two horsemen were traveling swiftly along the narrow trail on which he stood, so much his woods-wise senses told him immediately. Briefly, he considered sliding down the bank

to the road, out of the way; the trail on which he stood was very narrow, scarcely wide enough for two men to travel abreast. A vague something warned him of trouble. He had felt this way for days. A sort of trouble hunch! He didn't like it; he was a firm believer in hunches. But it was foolish, of course. He shrugged, lit his ancient pipe, and waited.

It was several minutes before the horsemen appeared. There were two of them, right enough. And they surely were in a hurry. They were rough-appearing hombres, unshaven, dirty. One of them sported a fancy silk shirt. The other's exceedingly red face impressed itself on Dad's mind. Their horses had been running hard. The old prospector pawed doubtfully at his stubble-covered chin. Perhaps his hunch had been a good one, at that. Perhaps he should have——

But no, these men, hard boiled though they undoubtedly were, should be willing to answer a few simple questions. When they were fifty yards away, Dad faced them, teetering on the edge of the bank. His leathery face squinted into a sociable grin. They did not see him at first. Both seemed intensely interested in what might lie just beyond the next bend of the narrow ridge trail. Their red-rimmed eyes strained ahead. The tired horses were being pushed to the utmost. Both saw the old man at once. Both instinctively reached for guns. Surprised, and angered by this uncalled-for action, the old man reached for his own guns. Whatever their reason, they couldn't intimidate him. He stepped backward instinctively.

This backward step was fatal. His foot encountered space. All thought of the guns forgotten, he struggled wildly for balance. At sight of the old man's predicament, both horsemen laughed. With a frantic waving of arms, Dad succeeded in securing a footing on the brittle edge of the gravelly bank. Just as the horsemen came abreast, one of them freed a foot; and, still laughing, he kicked out suddenly. The pointed boot heel struck Dad Wallace in the breast; and, with a surprised grunt, he sprawled backward and rolled head over heels at ever increasing speed down the steep bank.

Coughing and spitting, eyes, ears, and nose filled with hot sand, he slithered headforemost out upon the roadway. He was mad through and through. Nobody could work a trick like that on him and get away with it. Although dazed by the fall, he was on his feet like a cat. A gun in each hand he dodged behind a dense sumac scrub and blinked upward. Both horsemen had disappeared. He swore softly and shook his head to get rid of the sudden dizziness. The sound of voices, near at hand just beyond a bend in the roadway, caused him to turn, more alert than ever.

A buckboard appeared, drawn by two long-limbed sorrel horses. Dad sought to focus his dizzy eyes on the occupants. There were two men, a white-faced lad driving, and a lean-bodied, older man. This latter held a rifle across his knees. For an instant Dad remained very still striving to clear his bewildered thoughts. Half hidden behind the sumac scrub, both serviceable six-guns held rigidly before him, he shook his shaggy head which was still full of sand and mumbled heartfelt curses. The man with the rifle suddenly espied the half-hidden, crouching figure. The rifle swung upward in a sharp arc. Just as that rifle started to move, Dad's senses cleared miraculously. Hence, not only did he see the ominous circling of that rifle which, in another instant, would be pointing directly at his ancient but precious self; but he also glimpsed a silver star on the grizzled man's flannel shirt. An officer! And there he, Dad Wallace, stood, a gun in each hand. Apparently hiding! Waiting!

Dad had lived long enough to realize

that there are times when it is next to impossible to explain away even the most innocent situation without vital danger to life and limb. This, he instantly decided, was one of those times. That long-barreled rifle would not wait upon a verbal explanation from a man with a gun in each hand. Of course, there was a chance—— But he decided to take no chances. He dropped to the ground and wriggled snakelike into a dense copse. Beyond the clump of sumac, he dropped down into a mossy gully, up the opposite bank and into a thicket of short-trunked spruce. Here he lay, breathing hard, listening with all ears. The buckboard had stopped. The sound of voices came to him, then the crack of a whip and a protesting creaking as the buckboard continued on its way.

Dad Wallace sighed relievedly and crawled out of the spruce thicket. At sight of his torn and bedraggled clothes, he swore heartily.

"Fine way t' welcome a feller," he grumbled. "These here towns is all a-boostin' their flea-bitten selves, a-lookin' fer t' increase their population. Here I come, a peaceful, law-abidin' citizen, lookin' fer a place t' roost; an' whut happens? A ornery coyote hists me a jolt in the ribs; a bone-headed law officer draws a bead on me. My new outfit's ruint. I'm plumb disgusted, not t' say——"

Dad had made his way back to the twisting roadway. Following, grumbling, in the direction taken by the buckboard, he came to a sudden stop as the staccato bark of a rifle sounded, echoing sharply back and forth across the wooded valley. That shot had come from comparatively near at hand; at first he thought the keen-eyed sheriff was taking a long distance shot at him. He searched tentatively for a place of concealment, his lips muttering peevishly. Although willing to fight when the exigency demanded and being thoroughly familiar with the sterling qualities of Roger and Pete as he called his two ancient 45's, he had no intention of carrying on a long-distance argument with a 30-30 Winchester, least of all when said Winchester was in the hands of a law officer.

But why should that officer be shooting at him, now? Back there, it had been different; perhaps that buckboard had carried a gold shipment. If so, his slinking alongside the road both hands full of guns, looked bad—looked like a possible stickup. But now, plodding in the middle of the road, a quarter of a mile behind the buckboard, should certainly prove his innocent intentions, providing the sheriff was waiting and watching up ahead somewhere. No, that long distance shot couldn't have been directed at him. Still?

As he hesitated, another shot sounded, another and still another. He heard a shouted command, yells, the squeals of frightened horses. Dad Wallace no longer hesitated. He started to run, in the direction of the shots. He didn't know why he did this, but that sheriff had acted queerly. Perhaps there really was gold on that buckboard? Perhaps a holdup had been feared? If so, he might be able to lend a hand and set himself right, once and for all, in this new community where he expected to make his home. Nothing like making a favorable impression, first off, among new neighbors. He hadn't been very lucky, so far.

And he didn't feel lucky even now. That trouble hunch still persisted. Perhaps in view of this, it would be best to go slow. He was a firm believer in "hunches." The lively run degenerated into a walk. He approached a right-angle turn in the road cautiously, gun in hand. Clattering hoofbeats sounded, drawing near. He peered surreptitiously out from behind a jutting boulder.

There were several horsemen grouped about the overturned buckboard. The

lad, driver of the wagon, sprawled in the roadway, white face staring—dead, or badly injured. The sheriff sat propped up against a saddle; a crimson smear streaked his forehead. The horsemen asked questions. The sheriff answered. And, listening, Dad Wallace discovered full justification for his trouble hunch.

"Et warn't "Dode" Lassiter then?"

"Nossir!" The sheriff shook his head positively. "Dode Lassiter never would of on'y creased me at a dozen paces. You know thet as well as me. He would of got me, sure. A dead shot, Dode is; an' so is "Sheely" Quirk, his side kick. Nossir, 'twarn't neither o' them, I'm plumb positive; even though I didn't see 'em. I didn't see nobody. The shots come frum behin' them bushes. Whoever it was, knew me, by jing. He fired fust and didn't take no chances."

"You didn't see the bandits, sheriff? Not a sign?"

"Nary a sign. But no, I won't say thet, neither. I didn't see the feller akcherly do the shootin', an' o' course I didn't know nothin' fer a spell after this here bullet creased me; but I'm purty sartin' who done it. Leastways, I'd know the hombre ef I seen him again. He's a little cuss, with bandy legs an' a red flannel shirt; he packs two guns. A ornery lookin' hombre, ef I ever seen one."

"But I thought you said——"

"Jest hold your hosses, 'Shorty,' I'm a-gettin' the story to you jest as fast as I can. Like I said, he's a little feller, with bandy legs, totin' two guns. He had pale eyes and was plumb mean lookin'. He was hidin' out up the road yender, when we come along; but I got the drop on him, an' he ducked. I didn't foller him, not wantin' t' leave Louis alone with the bullion; and knowin' you boys would be meetin' up with us right soon, I planned on traipsin' back an' interviewin' thet same feller. Then—then this happened. Don't see how in tarnation thet bandit could of headed us off like he did, but he were quicker'n a cat. Jiminetty, you'd orter seen him skedaddle when I pulled a bead on him."

"And so—"

"He's a stranger aroun' these parts. Leastways, I never did see him afore. But you cain't miss him, Shorty—a little feller, with bandy legs, a red shirt, and a mean face. He cain't git out of the hills on'y by the Winthrop trail. An' with a load o' bullion, he cain't travel fast. He cain't git away."

But Dad Wallace, listening, decided that it was up to him to prove that the loquacious old sheriff was wrong. Either that, or jail for highway robbery, murder, perhaps! Yes, he might even hang. They suspected him, Dad Wallace! And, chances were, that he could not escape. He might avoid capture for a while; but he had no horse, no food, and he was unfamiliar with the country. Yes, they certainly would get him, sooner or later. What to do? He must do something and that quickly. Already the horsemen were dividing into groups for the man hunt and were receiving instructions from Shorty.

In a long and eventful life, Dad Wallace had encountered many startling adventures. This particular situation was a serious one; a matter of life and death. But the old sour dough was not one to give up without a struggle. He had wriggled out of some pretty tight holes before. There must be a way out of this. Lying flat on his stomach in a brier tangle behind the big rock, he considered calmly, ways and means. A possible solution struck him suddenly. Those two hombres, up there, on the ridge wall! They had pushed him over the bank, and they had laughed. No respectable citizen would have done a thing like that and laughed. Perhaps they were the bandits? Perhaps?

The old sour dough's stout heart beat

fast. The more he thought about it, the faster this responsive organ went, and the more certain he became. "Silk Shirt" and "Red Face" had been in a hurry. Yes, they were the guilty ones; Dad was sure of it. But how to prove it? Under existing conditions, he dared not come into the open with his suspicions. Those men, out there, were ugly. They would not believe him. It remained, therefore, for him to round up those two men, Silk Shirt and Red Face. If his suspicions turned out to be correct, he would, at one stroke, clear himself and find adequate revenge for that unprovoked attack. Yes, he would do it.

Pursuant to which Spartan decision he crawled painfully out of the brier patch and again peered out around the big rock. The horsemen were gone, having separated to scour the hills in search of a little runt, with bandy legs and a mean face. The buckboard had been righted and was even now jouncing over the rutted roadway toward town bearing the loquacious sheriff. Dad could hear the latter's harsh voice above the clattering of the ancient vehicle. And the white-faced lad could not be seriously injured; he sat on a back seat, head in hands.

Luck broke for the arbitrary old sour dough almost immediately. Behind the shrubs indicated by the sheriff, his keen eyes found many tracks. These tracks, cutting deep into the soft sand, led up the wall which was not so steep at this point. On top of the bank, the foot tracks merged with horseshoe tracks. They were tenderfeet, right enough. A native would have ridden down that bank. These two had been afraid to try it. They had carried a heavy weight between them up that sandy slope—the bullion the sheriff had mentioned. Dad Wallace's stubble-covered lips parted in a grin. His guess had proved to be a good one. Now, all he had to do was to land Silk Shirt and Red Face and return the bullion and incidentally keep out of sight of ten men, all of whom were looking for a little man, with bandy legs, and a red shirt. He had no horse; his food was gone; his body was bruised and battered; he was tired to the point of near exhaustion; still, as he circled away along the wooded ridge top following that evident trail, he mumbled soft-voiced curses in which the element of blasphemy was nullified by the half grin still wreathing his thin lips. He'd show them. Kick him, would they? And that sheriff, he'd show him, too. Bandy-legged was he? A mean face——

Dad judged that his men, unless they were stupid beyond all reason, would not attempt to go far from the scene of the holdup—not immediately, that is. Their horses were tired and they had every reason to expect close pursuit. Chances were, therefore, that they would hide away in some spot near at hand until the first flurry of excitement was over. The broken country leading away to the foothills was admirably suited for their purposes. No doubt they had fixed upon a definite spot for a hideout, before the robbery. Yes, they must surely have planned that far ahead.

Eyes and ears intently alert, treading catlike on the velvety carpet of pine needles, the old man followed swiftly along the wooded ridge top. The trail was as clear to his understanding eyes as the words on a printed page. He had no fear of coming upon his quarry unexpectedly. His unusual alertness was caused by quite another reason. There were ten men, somewhere near at hand; and these men were looking for a little hombre with bandy legs—which description fitted Dad Wallace with undoubted accuracy. These men were in that uncertain temper which might result in their shooting first and asking questions later. Dad's worst fears did not center on this latter con-

tingency, however; he had every confidence in his ability to look out for himself under any and all conditions. What worried him was that Silk Shirt and Red Face might blunder into the posse, thus depriving him of the privilege of effecting the capture and satisfactorily consumating his revenge on the man who had kicked him.

On the edge of a sun-burned open space, perhaps a quarter of a mile in diameter, Dad stopped; and, with squinting eyes, he watched a series of mighty steps leading upward to a towering peak. At first he discerned no sign of life on these naked ridges. The bandits had boldly crossed this open space less than half an hour before, making no doubt, for some one of the innumerable cañons lining the upper foothills. Dad was undecided whether or not to attempt to cross that sunlit open. When just about decided to chance it, his keen old eyes caught a suspicion of motion on top one of the upper walls. It was a man, sitting, back against a rock in the shadows. There was a rifle at the man's side. He was searching the valley below through a pair of binoculars. Dad swallowed hard and addressed himself, caustically.

"Dang nigh got off on the wrong foot that there time, ye ol' coot." As his eyes grew accustomed to the glare of sun on yellow rock, Dad recognized the man, Shorty. "Wal, he ain't spotted my boys, yit." With which hopeful comment, the old man circled about the clearing, holding close within the shelter of the brier-infested thicket.

Half an hour later, face and hands scratched and bleeding, his bedraggled clothes all but torn from his back, he came upon the bandits' trail on the opposite side of the clearing. He was hot and hungry and tired, his temper uncertain. He swore feelingly at the clinging underbrush that wrapped about his short legs.

But his pertinacity was soon to be rewarded. Less than a mile beyond the clearing, the trail led into a rock-littered cañon, bordered on either side by precipitous walls a hundred feet high. Instinctively, the old sour dough knew that he had run his quarry to earth. Gun in hand, he proceeded cautiously.

Even so, he came upon them unexpectedly. Rounding a jut in the uprearing wall, he found himself looking down into a little basin, which seemingly had been scooped by a giant spoon out of the bottom of the cañon. Silk Shirt and Red Face! They were eating, laughing between bites. The horses were hobbled near at hand beside a little spring. On the ground, between the two men, were two rope-bound wooden boxes. The bullion!

Dad loosened the guns in the holsters, then crouched on the mossy ground and pawed thoughtfully at his chin. All was not yet clear sailing. He would have to work his way down into that basin, somehow, without being discovered, to render capture of the wanted men absolutely certain. Of course, he might try it from where he stood; but the bottom of that depression was thick with big boulders any one of which would serve as adequate concealment if they saw fit to ignore him, and the distance was too great for accurate shooting. No, it wouldn't do to take a chance. He must make absolutely sure; and to do this, he must get down there, somehow.

On the opposite side of the basin, a single thick-limbed cedar jutted out of the wall, just above the little spring, and not a dozen yards from the two bandits. He could climb out on a limb of that tree and drop into the moist sand beside the spring. Yes, with luck, he could do it. Crawling on hands and knees, at times wriggling over the rocks, the old man circled cautiously about the rim of the little basin. Arriving at the cedar scrub, he hesitated for a long time, planning meticulously for every expected contingency.

Unfortunately, however, the expected so often fails to happen. It was so with Dad. From the beginning, his well-laid plans went a-miss. In the first place, the instant he started out on the limb of the cedar scrub, one of the horses registered noisy alarm. Both bandits caught up rifles; and, inasmuch as the cedar offered the only possible concealment for any living thing, their attentions centered on that same cedar. Dad froze about the knotty limb and remained absolutely motionless, hoping against hope that no vagrant sun rays would point him out. But he was well hidden, and they did not see him. Evidently, neither considered the advisability of investigating the cedar scrub at closer range.

When they finally turned back to their interrupted meal, Dad breathed a sigh of relief and again started edging his way along the limb. Just a few inches more, and—— But the old man's spell of bad luck was still upon him. Without a single warning creak, the limb broke. Dad landed on his back on the sloping edge of the pool. He grunted gustily as the wind left his lungs, but not for an instant did his quick wits cease functioning. White of face, gasping for breath, he rolled over and snatched at his guns, seized them, came to a knee. But the gravelly bank crumbled beneath his weight. He struggled for balance, arms wildly waving, then toppled backward into the pool.

Even in the face of this new misfortune, however, his wits did not forsake him. He held both hands, with the two guns, rigidly upright to keep them from getting wet, as he sank beneath the water. Luckily the spring was no more than eighteen inches in depth. The entire pool was in the black shadow cast by the overhanging cedar; and, too, the broken limb draped about the edge formed a perfect screen between the sputtering Dad and the two thoroughly alarmed bandits. Both bandits stood, rifles in hand, watching, intently alert. They held their fire. Dad scrambled to his knees, and, well hidden, peered out through the cedar screen. Still they did not shoot. Apparently they were not certain whether a man or an animal had invaded their camp. If the latter, it would not do to rouse the whole neighborhood.

Dad thrust the muzzles of both guns abruptly out through the cedar screen. "Stick 'em up!" he ordered.

The command acted like a spring release on the two tense-bodied bandits. With one accord the half-raised rifles lifted. Four reports sounded, almost as one. Not quite as one, however. The heavier roar of Dad Wallace's six-guns came a split second before the staccato bark of the rifles. Both rifle shots plowed into the wet gravel a scant six inches from the old man's body. Neither rifle had succeeded in rising quite high enough.

Both of Dad's guns, however, had been accurately focused before he gave voice to that time-honored command; hence, both shots had gone home. The rifle flew from Silk Shirt's grasp; he stared with a curious sort of dazed wonder at his numbed hands. He was uninjured. His companion had not fared so well. With Red Face, Dad figured, it was not safe to take any chances; he was the leader and by far the more desperate of the two. The heavy leaden slug from the second gun, therefore, struck Red Face in the right shoulder. His thick body spun half about; and he reeled headlong to the ground, the rifle clattering on the rocks a yard beyond his outstretched fingers.

"Had enough, young feller?" said Dad.

Silk Shirt's pasty face and staring eyes gave adequate answer. It was as Dad had figured, with the leader out of the running, Silk Shirt was through.

"Awright, reach fer the moon, son. Be with you direckly."

An hour later two heavily laden horses plodded wearily along the serpentine roadway toward the little town of Beverly. The paint horse, in the lead, carried two heavy rope-bound boxes, and a little man in a tattered red shirt, whose thin face was deeply lined with fatigue. The roan mare in the rear carried two men bound with many coils of rope. One of these men slumped weakly in the saddle and was supported by his companion.

A mushroom of dust at the end of a straight strip of road lifted, disclosing several horsemen. Dad awaited their approach. It was the loquacious old sheriff at the head of several men. A voluminous bandage inexpertly applied served the sheriff in place of a hat. The officer's keen eyes appraised Dad and his charges.

"Dode Lassiter and Sheely Quirk," he muttered. "By jing, I never would of believed it. An'—an'——"

More horsemen appeared from the opposite direction—the man, Shorty, with members of the first posse.

"Looky here, Shorty. Both of 'em——"

"Yeah, I see. I seen it all." Grinning widely Shorty gripped Dad Wallace's hand. "Yessir, I seen it all, with the glasses. I seen everything; an' you shore hed your nerve, stranger, danged ef you didn't. I was too fur away t' do anything, but you didn't need no help." Breathlessly, Shorty related the story of the capture.

When he was done they circled about Dad, shook his hand, and slapped him on the back. He took it all, grinning modestly, as became a hero.

"Guess mebbe you don't realize whut you've done, stranger. These here fellers is bad ones. Both of 'em is killers. They been runnin' loose in these hills fer nigh onto a year. Rewards total two thousand dollars fer the two of 'em. Hope you're aimin' on stayin' with us fer a spell. Plumb admire t' hev you. An' whut might be your handle, stranger?"

Dad continued to grin. "Me, I'm thet little hombre with the bandy legs, an' the mean face. And then, in the embarrassed silence that followed, he laughed loudly. "Har, har, har, I sure earned it. Ain't it the truth?"

Again he laughed. All eyes followed his watery gaze to where a weather-worn signboard nosed up through a mesquite shrub. "Welcome" this sign read, and beneath in half-obliterated letters "to Beverly, the Garden City."

REPLANTING WESTERN FORESTS

IN order to repair the devastations of fires in the national forests of the West, it is necessary to replant in places that have been so badly burned over that young trees will not come up naturally. During the past year, more than three thousand acres of national forest reserve in western Montana and northern Idaho, chiefly in the St. Joe and Cœur d'Alene forests, have been planted with young trees for the purpose of repairing the damage wrought by forest fires. This replanting was done at a cost of $10.44 an acre. The favorite variety for replanting was the Western white pine, which was planted on 2,132 acres. Yellow pine plants were set out on 784 acres, and the rest of the land was planted with spruce and cedar.

Besides reforesting 1,911 acres in the St. Joe National Forest, and 1,363 acres in the Cœur d'Alene National Forest, the Cabinet Forest was planted with young trees on 330 acres, the Lolo Forest on twelve acres, and the Kaniksu Forest on six acres.

Pioneer Towns of the West

GLOBE, ARIZONA

By A. V. Strope

Author of "Texarkana," etc.

IN the southern part of Gila County, Arizona, fathered by the pioneer and mothered by the mountain-girded desert, is the mining city of Globe. Not so very long ago—within the memory of some of us—the thriving town of to-day was a rough camp of the type featured in many of the stories that appear in these pages. Set in the heart of the Apacheria known to the Spanish conquistadors, on the wild frontier famous as the hunting ground of that mad Indian outlaw, the notorious Geronimo, Globe has passed through every phase possible to the spectacular development of a Western community; and from the travail of these experiences has been born the beautiful modern town to which every citizen so justly refers with pride.

WSA

In 1877—less than fifty years ago—Globe was located in what was then a part of Pinal County. Three years later Gila County was formed from a portion of Pinal and Maricopa Counties. The embryo city was included in the new territory.

From all reports and records the history of this pioneer town is a fascinating one, not only for the elements of interest which mark it, but also as an example of the growth of a typical Western mining community.

In 1878 a little weekly newspaper, *The Arizona Silver Belt,* was first issued. From an early edition of this publication we learn that Globe was possessed of seventy-four houses at the time, and that eight more were contracted for. These were all good substantial buildings—certainly an astounding fact in that era of tent cities and roughly constructed shacks.

The same copy of the paper informs

us that funds were being collected to provide for a schoolhouse and teacher. Somewhat later a wee adobe school was built, and the education of the younger generation of the town was begun.

Nor did the new town lack a business district. The Pinal Hotel advertised lodging at fifty cents a night; and daily stages were operated between Globe and Silver City. Globe could boast, as well, a drug store, a general store, a restaurant that was owned and managed by Mr. J. H. Pascoe who now resides in Long Beach, California, and the inevitable laundry run by the equally inevitable Chinaman. For some reason the pigtailed Celestial seems to be essential seasoning to the flavor of the true West. From the stories of Bret Harte to those of our own Max Brand, he features as an indispensable bit of local color.

Perhaps we can give no clearer idea of the town in those pioneer days than by quoting once again from that mine of interesting information, *The Silver Belt.* The following extract brings home to us very strongly the rough character of the camp:

"The unrestrained and frequent use of firearms upon our streets has become a nuisance; it should be at once abated. The wounding of Mr. Saxe here ought to have moved the minds of our officers to nip offenders. An example or two would have given the empty-pated, given to firing just for the fun of hearing bullets crack, something else to think about, and created a big demand for jew's-harps as a substitute for detonating powder."

It seems that one wanton noise seeker fired a bullet at a rock. It deflected, went through the pants leg of one innocent bystander, and struck the unfortunate Mr. Saxe in the hip. This incident occasioned the editor's comment.

It is difficult to comprehend the hardships of those early settlers. The forces with which they had to contend were appalling. The isolation of the town in those days was a terrific disadvantage. All supplies were freighted in from Yuma by way of Bowie and Willcox, and these freights were drawn by plodding mules through burning desert land. Yet despite the barriers in the path the gallant pioneers won through. Let us remember that to their efforts the Globe of 1926 owes its beauty and prosperity.

Modern city though it is, there are still to be found in and about Globe eloquent reminders of those frontier days. There is, for example, the fine old Apache chief, Talkalai, who once rode the wild range with his braves. To-day, though he is over one hundred years of age, his voice yet carries weight in the councils of his people at the White Mountain Indian Reservation which is located not far from Globe. This Indian chief is only one of many links between the old and the new of the city.

Another survivor of the early days is the *Arizona Silver Belt.* We are glad to say that this interesting newspaper still flourishes; however, it is now published, not in Globe but in the nearby city of Miami.

Turning from the past to the present we have a community that little resembles that pictured in the foregoing paragraphs. The growth of the town has been rapid and prosperous.

Of course, Globe is primarily a mining city. It has been said that Gila County rests on a copper bottom. Certainly it is one of the richest copper regions in the world. Over thirty per cent of the world's supply comes from this district. The annual output is valued at thirty million dollars; and all of this vast amount of ore is milled and smeltered in Globe and the neighboring Miami.

The Old Dominion Mine, which is situated on the outskirts of the town, is still among the foremost in the country though it has been producing stead-

ily for over forty years. Due to the discovery and development of this important ore body, Globe has increased greatly in population and prosperity during the time that it has been in operation.

In connection with the mines is the Globe Mine Rescue and First Aid Station which is located just outside the city limits. This is one of the most complete and well-equipped institutions of its kind in the country. Indeed, so excellent are its appointments that it has frequently attracted national—even international—comment and praise. Certainly its value to Gila County cannot be overestimated, for it is dedicated to the safety of those who by their labors insure the success of the district —the men who spend their days in wresting the buried wealth from the secret depths of the earth.

Aside from mining, the principal source of the city's revenue is to be found in the many ranches which dot Gila County. Globe is the supply center for all of these. As the country roundabout is ideal for cattle raising, and the ranges are rich and extensive, the trade is not small.

One of the most interesting points in the consideration of the district is that of the huge irrigating system. The main feature of this is, of course, the Roosevelt Dam. It is difficult to give in words more than the slightest idea of its magnitude. From base to top it measures two hundred eighty-four feet; the distance across the crest is seven hundred feet; and a roadway twenty feet in width traverses the structure. Water over the spillway drops a greater distance than that going over Niagara Falls. The lake impounded by this titanic piece of masonry is the largest artificial body of water in the world.

Perhaps the perfect vantage point from which to view this spectacle is a spot on the Apache Trail fifteen miles from Globe. Standing here the country roundabout is spread in panorama before the eyes. The irrigated land, beautiful in the light green of the wheat fields and the darker color of the orchards, garlanded by the glistening ribbons of the canals, lies at one's feet. In the foreground, gleaming blackly silver, is the wide expanse of the lake, flanked by the cream-white dam and the saguara-bordered shore. It is a sight never to be forgotten, exquisite in its calm shimmering loveliness.

When we look at these fertile valleys and try to picture them as they were when Globe was settled fifty years ago; when we realize that in that comparatively short period of time the barren desert, supporting only the growth of the saguaras, has bloomed in all the beauty of garden and grass land; then it is that we comprehend the vast importance of irrigation. The very life of these blossoming acres depends upon this structure of concrete and stone which stands, an impressive monument to man's triumph over nature.

The most important project in Globe at present is the construction of the Coolidge Dam on the San Carlos River. This is planned to approximate in size the Roosevelt. Already the surveying of the dam site has been completed, and the actual work is under way. It is estimated that the building cost will be upward of six million dollars, but the waste land reclaimed by the impounded waters will more than repay the initial outlay.

It is estimated that over fifty per cent of the total cost of the dam will be for labor. Naturally this will mean much increased prosperity for the neighboring towns during the building period. Globe with its population of over twelve thousand will benefit greatly.

Residentially, Globe is a very attractive community. Some of the most beautiful homes in Arizona are located in or near it. The many advantages

which it offers cannot be too heavily stressed.

The climate of the town is very nearly perfect. According to the old-timers, he who does not desire to settle down for good and all should not tarry in Gila County more than two weeks. Three thousand five hundred feet above sea level, the air of the district is fresh and invigorating. It is the proud boast of the residents that the sun shines three hundred and fifty-nine days a year; that the winters are mild, and that, though the summer days are warm, the hours of the night are always cool. Heat prostrations are almost never recorded, and no one has ever been known to freeze to death. What more could the most exacting ask of climate?

Educationally, Arizona ranks among the first five States of the Union. Globe does not fall below the high standard set by the other cities of the State. From the days of the little adobe schoolhouse, aforementioned, to the present, interest in the higher culture and mental development has not waned. Gila County, of which Globe is one of the most important cities, has thirty-five grade schools and two high schools, one of which is located in Globe. The school buildings are new and of the best-equipped modern type.

The recreational resources are numberless. Scenery of the most wild and rugged loveliness alternates with views of pastoral tranquillity. Hot sands bearing the prickly barrel cactus present a startling contrast to rolling farm land and grass-carpeted cattle range. Well-kept roads lead from Globe in all directions.

"Bottomless" chasms, precipitous ledges, wooded hills, and deep cañons provide countless views of picturesque variety. And, strange in the midst of the splendor of unadorned nature, can be seen the huge chimneys of the copper smelters raised from the hilltops like man-made temples to some pagan god.

Besides the many alluring automobile drives, Globe presents other fascinating diversions. There are a thousand and one points of interest that may be visited on foot. First of these is the Roosevelt Dam which has already been discussed. Then there are the caves of the cliff dwellers who inhabited Arizona long ages ago. Located not far from Globe, within two miles of the Apache Trail, are examples of these odd cavities in the rock which are of great interest not only to the scientist but also to the layman who is possessed of an antiquarian bent.

The Cobre Valley Country Club is situated on the highway between Globe and Miami. The clubhouse is of the most up-to-date type, equipped with an excellent swimming pool, and having a good golf course. Easily accessible, within three miles of the country club, is the Burch Playground. Here all kinds of play paraphernalia have been installed; the recreation park is supported by its donors, The Inspirational Consolidated Copper Company.

Atop the Pinal Mountains, seven thousand five hundred feet above sea level, is what is known as The Potato Patch. This is a recreation and picnic ground. Provision is made here for the establishment of camps; firewood and water are plentiful; and, as the air at such an altitude is always cool and refreshing, the place is very popular on hot summer days.

The fishing in this region is unexcelled. Roosevelt Lake and the many trout streams provide fine sport for the ardent angler. Hunting also is possible as the country supplies all varieties of game from squirrels to fierce stock-killing cougars.

With out-door pastimes such as these the people of this area maintain a high health record.

The municipal government is extremely satisfactory. William Wells is the mayor, and Wilson T. Wright is the

city clerk. It is claimed that Gila County shows less lawlessness per capita than any other place in the United States. This fact speaks well, not only for the officers of the law, but also for the citizens who enable them so effectively to enforce that law. Chief Eugene Shute heads the police department of the city.

Among others prominent in civic affairs are F. A. Woodward, manager of the Iron Cup Coffee Company, and a former State senator; W. G. McBride, manager of the Old Dominion Mining Company; W. A. Sullivan, secretary-treasurer of the Globe Luncheon Club; the old-timer, J. J. Keegan, who is a director on the Lee Highway Board; W. W. Brookner, another old-timer; and W. T. McNelly.

In retrospect, then, we find Globe a thriving city, beautifully situated and competently governed. From the pioneer town of yesterday through the mad vicissitudes of the frontier times, the community has developed steadily until to-day it stands the proud equal of the best in the land.

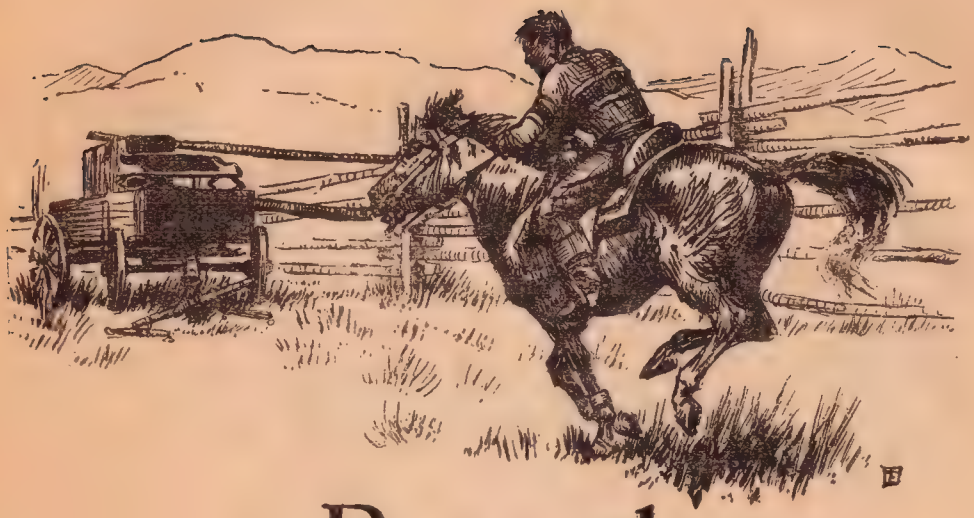
FOX FARMING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

THE Canadian fur industry has made great progress during the last few years, especially in the matter of marketing furs. For many years, the annual fur catch of the Dominion was sent for the most part to the markets in London, New York, St. Louis, and other places. Now the sales held in Winnipeg, Montreal, and other centers of the fur trade handle vast quantities of furs and obtain as high prices as any other markets. Pelts from the United States, Siberia, China, and other countries are sent to these sales, and buyers from all over the world attend them.

Of late years, Winnipeg has come to the fore as a receiving point for Canadian furs, for it derives its supplies from the great fur country lying to the north, through northern Manitoba, the Mackenzie River basin, and the shores of Hudson Bay. During 1925, something like five million dollars' worth of furs were handled in the Winnipeg sales.

British Columbia, too, is developing its fur trade as the chief fur-producing country of the Pacific Northwest. For a long time, the various gold rushes that took place in that province and in the adjacent Yukon country, diverted attention from the vast wealth that the fur resources of the region held. During the past five years, British Columbia's fur catch has ranged between a million and a million and a half dollars' worth annually.

Another aspect of the situation in this province is the great increase in the number of fur farms. Between 1923 and 1924, the number of fox farms is reported to have doubled, and importations of foxes suitable for breeding purposes have been made in the Okanogan, Kootenay, Thompson River, and Fraser River valleys. Fur farming is also greatly in vogue on Vancouver Island.



Bud

By E. L. Chicanot

THE cow country of southern Alberta was immersed in a new craze—sunk well up to its withers in fact. The mania which now occupied all the ranchers in that territory was for hunters—jumping horses. Except for market purposes, interest in common range stock might be said to have practically vanished. Enthusiasm had even waned in polo which had been a passion for so long. The country was being scoured for hunters, and animals were being imported at fabulous prices.

It was not that these owners of big herds were seriously interested in any phase of the chase. For any hunting in which they ever indulged the native cayuse, nimble, wiry, and speedy, could not be surpassed; but the spirit of rivalry is the greatest zest of the cowman's life, and it is ever changing. Sometimes it is one thing, sometimes another. It had been successively outlaw horses, matched dray teams, Russian hounds, polo ponies, and football teams. Now it was for jumping horses. A man was known by the jumper he kept. And as great a fanatic as any was Carl Myers of the Bar 4 ranch.

Probably no one on the Bar 4 was less interested in jumping horses or any kind of horses than Bud Hasard. Since he had come back from France with an assortment of German shrapnel skillfully distributed, ranch life had not been the same. He wasn't as agile as he had been, and he realized this more forcibly as each year passed. The horses on the Bar 4 he found a particular nuisance, and they were continually getting him into trouble. As he rode slowly over the prairie in the direction of the corral he glanced maliciously round at the pinto mare he was leading which was straining back at the end of the halter shank. Then he thought of the latest pure-bred importation of boss Carl Myers and the enormous sum he was said to have paid for it.

"Jumping Jehosaphat!" he exclaimed. "Some money! That 'ud sure take me

back to France an' buy me a nice little place at Agnez les Duisans."

He continued to dream until he came within sight of the corral, when his countenance immediately took on an expression of distinct uneasiness, and he yanked wildly at the pinto mare in an endeavor to accelerate her rate of progress. Disappearing over the hill in the distance he could see the figures of the riders following in the wake of the chuck wagon. Only the boss remained behind, and something seemed to tell Bud he was merely waiting for him. Impatiently he seemed to be making an estimate of the distance his voice would carry, for when Bud was yet some space away his bellow reached him.

"You're fired before you can say a word. D'you think we're goin' to wait for you every day. All this spring you've bin plumb useless. Can't seem to keep your string together, nohow."

"Boss," pleaded Bud coming up, "it's this dog-gone pinto mare again. The ornery little cuss was out of the corral an' away down in the pasture."

"Why didn't you put hobbles on her like I told you to?"

"I sure did hobble her; an', believe me, boss, she still had 'em on when I found her."

"That for a fine tale. There ain't no cayuse can get outer that log corral hobbles or no hobbles."

"Boss, I'm tellin' you, she's a mystery horse. She gets outer every blamed thing she's put into. She's got me worn out tryin' to keep track of her."

"You're ravin'. Fact is you're plumb useless for ranchin' these days—too darned full of romantic notions! The range is too rough an' unfeminine for you. Like to amble again, eh? Like to sashay back to France? Well, I'm givin' you your chance. You're fired."

The corner of Bud's mouth tightened, and he spoke quietly. "All right, we won't say no more about it. I'll take part of my pay in a cayuse."

"Ain't one you can have," said Carl Myers curtly. "The whole string is needed for the round-up."

"But, dog-gone it, I can't walk off the place."

"Don't care how you get off so long as you go."

He tightened his lines and was about to ride away when a sudden thought checked him, and a gleam of malevolent humor came into his eye.

"I'll sell you the pinto mare."

"Aw, she's a hoodoo. Can't nothin' be done with her."

"Well, take her or leave her," said Myers, picking up the lines again. "The walkin' ain't so awfully bad."

"All right," said Bud despondently, after a long pause in which he visioned the miles of prairie between the ranch and Coyote Bluff. "I'll take her." With an expression of hopeless resignation and profound disgust he proceeded to transfer his saddle from the animal he had been riding to the pinto mare.

The boss gathered up his lines. "You an' the pinto ought to be right well acquainted by now. Probably she'd like France, too. Mebbe she'll get you there if you hang on to her long enough."

Laughing loudly at his own joke, Carl Myers put spurs to his mount and without turning his head again galloped off in the direction taken by the round-up outfit. Inwardly raging, Bud entered the bunk house to emerge a few minutes later with his simple belongings in a sack which he proceeded to tie behind the saddle. Slowly he swung himself up and viciously cut the mare across the neck with his quirt.

"You goldarn, ringtailed, mottled mystery! How long we gonna keep company this time?"

A wrathful indignation was smoldering in the breast of the usually phlegmatic and philosophic Bud as he left the ranch and slowly set off across the prairie. It was bad enough to be

fired, but to have his cherished dream ridiculed in that fashion! The boys had always respected it, though doubtless they thought he was crazy. They couldn't help knowing all about the letters in the queerly shaped handwriting which had come regularly all these years from that pretty little French village where his squadron had been billeted so long. Funny how the girl there still waited for him. Hang it all, he would get back some time in spite of Carl Myers and his ridicule. Agnez les Duisans! It was the one spot on earth for him. He knew he could pick up a little place in its tranquil countryside cheaply, and it cost next to nothing to live there. But how to make the grade? Without a job he was farther off than ever now.

The mare carelessly inserted one foot in a badger hole and nearly threw him, which drew attention to another grievance. He cursed violently as he drew her back. That was another dirty trick of Myers, to palm off the useless pinto on him for hard-earned wages. Darn the ornery little cuss, anyway. What was the everlasting mystery about her? A month before she had been brought in from the range, broken, and added to his string. She had been an infernal nuisance since. Never in all his years on the range had he come across a horse which caused so much worry and trouble. Nothing was able to hold her, hobbles or no hobbles. She was the equine Houdini. No wonder Carl Myers had been willing to let her go.

Continuing his way along the trail across the prairie—where signs on every hand spoke of spring and reawakening life, and the warm sun fell comfortingly across his back—calm came once more to take possession of Bud's troubled spirit; gradually his old philosophic, optimistic self reasserted itself.

"Yes, sir, I'm gonna get back to France somehow; but first I'd sure like to take the works outer Carl Myers."

The last trace of dissatisfaction with the world at large had disappeared by the time he reached Coyote Bluff where, on the outskirts of the settlement, he hitched his pony outside the establishment of one Pete Hanson, purveyor of liquid refreshment. He entered, but he did not remain long; for he contemplated covering much distance before nightfall. After brief respite and refreshment he considerably astounded Pete and somewhat outraged his hospitality by rising and making his way out. Pete followed him to the door. As Bud emerged his eye alighted on a sulky standing in the yard. He regarded it seriously for some minutes.

"Looks a likely rig for tourin', Pete."

"Uh-huh," said Pete, noncommittally.

"I'm through with cowboyin', Pete. Figure on travelin' some. Ain't as fond of the saddle as I used to be. Might be we could arrange a trade."

With remarkable speed and a signal lack of difficulty the transaction was effected, and Bud proceeded to remove the highly ornamented saddle from the pinto cayuse while Pete went to the barn.

"How are you goin' to respond to this system of percolatin', you mottled mystery?"

The pinto left no doubt as to her pronounced objection to the new procedure as Pete came out of the barn with the light harness. A highly diverting time followed in which the two endeavored to adjust it to the mare who swung rapidly in terror from side to side and snorted her fright. Remarkable nimbleness was displayed on the part of both Pete and Bud. It was only after a series of hairbreadth escapes that it was, at length, accomplished; and Bud led the trembling and reluctant animal toward the vehicle.

"Now, you run up the rig," he called to Pete.

"Not me," said Pete. "I'm a mar-

ried man now. I'll hold the mare if you like."

The pinto stood quivering violently as the shafts were run up on either side, and Bud set about his task with a reckless persistency and heroic disregard of consequences which would have drawn admiration and applause under other circumstances. The animal appeared to be more terrified than infuriated; and, far from exhibiting an expected and perfectly natural desire to reduce the rig to splinters and Bud to a pulp, seemed rather consumed with a burning anxiety to separate herself by as much distance as possible from the contrivance. It required all Pete's efforts to hold her head. Eventually mare and sulky were connected in some uncertain fashion, and Bud clambered awkwardly and somewhat apprehensively to the seat behind the plunging animal. He gathered up the lines.

"Let her go, Pete."

Pete left the animal's head; and, having a reasonable solicitude for the safety of his property, made a wild jump for the gate. He flung it open not a moment too soon. The mare had leaped forward so impetuously as to jerk Bud abruptly from the seat against her haunches. In some miraculous manner he fell back again into his place as the vehicle flashed between the gate posts, missing one of them by the merest fraction of an inch. Thereafter the mare turned north, which was just as well since Bud intended to travel in this direction, but would in any case have had to go whither the mare willed.

He found himself being bowled along with a sensation of exhilarating speed he had never before experienced. Periodically he actually floated deliciously in space, to be dropped back to earth again with a jar which shook every bone in his body. It was wildly, deliriously intoxicating. The saddle had nothing on this mode of traveling! He swung his lines recklessly against the pinto's flanks inducing, if possible, a yet more furious burst of speed. His troubles had completely evaporated; and he gave vent to wild, enthusiastic whoops of genuine ebullition as the rig continued on its perilous way.

The pinto's brief sojourn at the ranch had imparted to her absolutely no knowledge of trails and a mere passing acquaintanceship with fences. The big open spaces were all one to her, and she was heading blindly for a homesteader's shack before which stretched several strands of wire. She saw the fence, but Bud did not. The first thing he knew the mottled streak had left the ground and was sailing through the air. Vaguely he realized he was following. There was a sudden rude jerk, a tearing of wires, and a splintering of wood. The rig landed heavily, Bud hanging perilously over the side and clutching the seat frantically with both hands.

The delay was only temporary. The mare was clear herself and had brought the rig over. She went straight on without loss of time. Bud had lost the lines in his brief aviating and could do nothing but hang on desperately as the vehicle bumped over the rough ground. This time he saw the fence but was quite powerless. He closed his eyes as the cayuse prepared to leave the ground, and then felt himself jerked once more into space. There was the same straining of wires; a post cracked off sharp; and the rig came to earth with a thud which rattled every joint in both vehicle and occupant. Bud landed back only half in the seat and, hanging grimly on, found the mare still forging ahead dragging the sulky by one shaft —the other being broken and hanging uselessly down.

The next fence arrived almost immediately and once more Bud found himself floating in ether. This time he left the rig quite definitely. So did the pinto. When he came to himself, still

rather dazed, he found himself sitting amid what had been a sulky, on one side of the fence; on the other side, the mare, apparently quite unhurt, was exhibiting a warm interest in the pasturage and trailing two broken shafts.

There was a light of dawning comprehension in Bud's eye as he sat up; and, as he rose to his feet, he regarded the mottled animal, contentedly browsing, with a rapt expression that was almost reverent.

"The darned little runt! So that's how she done it. Who ever heard of a range cayuse jumpin' like that before. Ambitious above your station, you is. Come here, you mottled little devil! Guess we ought to understand one another better from now on."

It was two days later when, as evening shadows were beginning to fall, Bud, seated bareback astride the pinto mare, crossed the bridge over the Bow River and found himself in the environs of the city of Calgary. The pinto's head was bowed in utter despondency, and her angular face bore an expression of woeful melancholy and intense pessimism. Bud's attitude as he slumped tiredly over the animal's back was equally expressive, for three notches in his belt represented that day's mealtimes.

Apathetically he permitted the cayuse to take her own way; and, it was not surprising that, when she spied a large and attractive green expanse through a gate, she turned in and commenced nibbling at the short grass. Bud became immediately struck with the unusual activity which prevailed there considering the lateness of the hour. From all directions came the sound of hammering; groups of men were moving about with lumber; and others struggling with huge tents. Then he realized where he was—the Calgary fair ground. He walked over to one of the workmen.

"Fair comin' off soon?"

"Uh huh. Starts to-morrow."

"Same old thing?"

"Uh huh."

"Nothin' new?"

"Well, the country's kinder gone bughouse over jumpin' horses, an' there do seem to be a lot of excitement over the jumpin' contest to-morrer afternoon. There's a prize of five hundred dollars, an' they do say there's more side money up than over the ridin' at the Stampede."

He moved away with his burden; and Bud turned to reflectively regard the pinto mare—a very ordinary and unimposing sample of cow pony, busily engaged in cropping the arena—before, with shoulders hunched and hands buried deep in his pockets, he moved away.

Darkness thickened; and one by one the workmen left, until Bud found that he had the grounds to himself. Confident that the mare would not wander beyond their confines as long as a blade of grass remained, and finding a modicum of consolation in the thought that one at least of them could eat, he tightened his belt another notch, raised the flap of one of the tents, rolled inside, and made himself as comfortable as possible.

During the night he bethought him of one Jim Bannister who had formerly worked on the Bar 4 and had left some months back to run a livery barn in Calgary. He would be good for a meal at least, he decided cheerfully. Early in the morning he left the grounds and made his way with the pony across the almost silent city. Jim he found already astir. He had only to make known his immediate needs and was soon remedying the long abstinence.

"In for the fair, Bud?"

"I reckon to stay the day, p'raps."

"Busted, eh?" said Jim noting the absence of saddle and generally impoverished air.

"Just about."

"Want to sell the cayuse? Ain't no market at all just now for cow stock."

"I wasn't aimin' to sell her just a while. Figure on travelin' a little."

He swallowed the mouthful he was masticating and looked at his companion suggestively.

"Say, Jim, about this jumpin' competition they're havin' this afternoon. How high do these fancy horses jump?"

"Well," replied Jim pensively, "the record jump for a horse is just a little over eight feet; but these animals they got ain't such particular humdingers. They'll do between six an' seven feet, I guess."

"Jim," said Bud, a hush in his voice, indicating the pinto, "this here is a jumping cayuse."

Jim spat and looked unimpressed.

"You know there ain't no such animal, Bud."

"There ain't never bin before as far as I ever heard. Mebbe some scandal in her ancestry. Anyhow the little runt took me an' a sulky over three fences, an' she's got herself outer six-foot corrals."

Jim spat again, and said nothing; but he looked more impressed and thoughtful.

"Jim, I gotta whole lot of faith in that pinto. I'm just achin' to show what she can do. Will you advance me enough to enter her in the contest an' to put on a little side bet? I'll work it out at the barn later."

"I think you're plumb crazy, Bud," said Jim. "You're takin' long chances. The cayuse may be able to get outer a corral, but jumpin' in a contest against trained jumpers is different."

"I gotta take a chance of some sort, Jim."

"All right, Bud. You know I'd lend you the money, though it looks plumb reckless to me. I got to go up to the fair grounds this mornin' to do some work, an' mebbe I can think up somethin' to help things along."

"Say, Jim, if you can fix things so as to make this 'ere cayuse think she's in a corral, just put your shirt on her yourself."

A large amount of interest naturally centered upon the new feature of the fair's annual program; and the eyes of all those in the stands were focused upon one corner of the arena where sprucely attired riders were gathering on highly bred—and equally highly priced—mounts. Then a spontaneous roar of laughter went up from the crowd as these rancher and equine aristocrats were joined by a squat cowboy figure in brown shirt and yellow chaps astride a pinto cow pony. This they took to be one of the humorous features interspersed among the more serious items of the day's program and howled their approval. Judges, however, hurried up, talked with the rider, looked at their papers, appeared somewhat bewildered, and went away. They appeared to discuss the matter with the other riders, who smiled, exchanged jocose remarks, and found it intensely amusing.

Some of the riders had been eying the jump with disapproval until Bud's appearance had distracted them. They now directed fresh attention to the fact that the jump had been built close to the railing on one side, so that there was no room to pass between. The judges talked it over among themselves, discussed it with the various contestants, and apparently agreed at length that it was too much trouble to move it for what would be gained by so doing. Appeased and satisfied, the riders moved back and prepared to commence jumping.

All the other animals took the first jump easily. Then came the turn of the pinto cayuse which was last. She did not seem to be at all aware of what was going on or have the slightest interest in it, standing by with drooping

head and melancholy expression. Bud spurred her up to the jump but she saw not the slightest sense in going over the bar when there was room on one side to pass round. Desperately Bud pulled her up and the crowd still thinking it was expected of them laughed and cheered. Again Bud rode her up to the jump, and she swerved sharply off to the side. With sinking heart he brought her back.

He was questioning whether it was worth while making a third essay when a diversion was caused by a wagon loaded down with fodder, bound for the barns, drawn by two fractious horses, evidently in the hands of an unskilled driver who was backing up in dangerous proximity to the jump. The wagon came to a halt just as the bars seemed imperiled, and judges hurried up fuming. As they did so Bud, who quickly appreciated what was happening, put the cayuse at the jump again. She looked vainly from one side to the other for escape; and, finding none, she leaped into the air and sailed over, clearing the bar by inches, while the other riders looked thunderstruck, and the crowd expressed its amazement in silence.

The driver of the wagon had alighted and was examining one of the wheels which was very obviously loose. Judges were expostulating; and the discomfited driver was endeavoring to explain. Meanwhile the crowd's impatience grew. The loaded wagon really offered no obstacle to further jumping; and, at length, the judges, seeing that it could not be moved for some time, shrugged their shoulders, stepped back, and gave the signal to continue.

There was no further trouble with the pinto. Whether it was that escape on both sides of the jump was effectively barred, or that with the natural intelligence of the cow pony she had caught on to what was expected of her, she took succeeding jumps in very fine fashion, and what was more seemed to be putting her heart into it. Bud's hopes again rose as rider after rider was eliminated, and he continued jumping easily, with the crowd going wilder at every round.

The second round had eliminated one. Two riders failed to make the jump in the next round, and another in the fourth, while two were eliminated in the fifth. Five riders came up for the sixth round but only three survived for the next. A further went out at the seventh, leaving only the pinto and a rangy roan in the running for the prize. The crowd was delirious with excitement, and the judges and contesting riders stood with mouths agape in amazement and stupefaction.

The roan took the jump first and failed dismally in a clumsy effort. The pinto followed; and, as the mare went over, she seemed to barely graze the bar with one foot. It trembled for a second and then fell. Again the roan was ridden up, its rider urging it to every ounce of effort; and once more the bar went flying. The pinto, following a minute or two later, seemed to make exactly the same kind of a jump and, barely touching the bar, dislodged it.

The two remaining contestants waited for the third jump and regarded each other jealously. The rider of the powerful roan was plainly incensed at thought of the possibility of his splendidly bred animal being outclassed by this nondescript of the range. Then the driver of the wagon who had been engrossed in fixing his wheel all this time moved over to the cowboy, and a whispered conversation took place between them.

"Tough luck, Bud. The mare's sure a humdinger. She ain't goin' to make it though, an' she ought to easily. Trouble is, like I told you, she ain't trained to jump. She don't lift her legs properly. Her left foreleg dangles

a bit as she goes over, an' she grazes the bar with it. She'd clear it easy but for that."

"Darn it all, I know she can do it. She's got outer corrals higher'n that."

"Great snakes! If you could get the darned little cuss to hold that left leg up with the right! I went an' put a tidy little wad on her myself."

Bud, feeling the issue was now hopeless, was buried in gloomy thought. Suddenly he lifted his head with a start of inspiration. "Jumping Jehosaphat! I've got a notion. It's plumb desperate, but I feel that way. Can you rustle a pair of hobbles?"

"Sure," said the puzzled Jim.

"Well, get 'em pronto."

Jim disappeared, and Bud turned round just in time to see the big roan make its third and last attempt at the jump. It was the worst of all, and the bar went flying. Every eye now turned to the little pinto mare, and just then Jim hurried up with the hobbles.

The crowd and those about the jump stared goggle-eyed, as Bud dismounted and proceeded to adjust the hobbles to the pinto's forelegs. What in the name of creation was he doing? Was he crazy, or was he giving up? Without looking up Bud went on with his task and, with the animal effectively hobbled, led her toward the jump. She moved slowly and awkwardly. Some yards off he halted her, estimated the distance with his eye, and then moved her back a trifle. He mounted, and the crowd waited breathless.

For a second he sat there; then suddenly he jabbed his spurs into the mare's flanks. The little beast with her forelegs close together took an awkward little cat hop forward, then a second and longer jump, and then as she came down rose on her hind legs until she was almost perpendicular. Coming down with all four feet bunched like a flash she expanded with the elasticity of a rubber band, launched into the air as if catapulted, and hurled straight and clean over the jump, to land tottering on the other side.

The crowd went wild and howled and shrieked its delight and enthusiasm. In an instant Bud was surrounded by excited individuals who showered congratulations upon him and frantically offered to buy the mare at prices which went up at every new offer. Bud was dazed and bewildered. He could not realize the good fortune which had come to him. Things were certainly coming his way, but it was all so sudden. Taking the pony by the bridle, in some embarrassment he forced a way out and sought the quietness of a barn for a little reflection.

Even here he was found, however. He had just taken a seat upon a stall and was commencing to get things adjusted properly in his mind when the door flew open and a wildly excited individual burst in. "Oh, there you are," exclaimed the stranger in relief. "You haven't sold the mare yet?"

"Nope."

"Thank Heaven! I've got to have her. I've got a wire from Carl Myers, the big rancher down Lethbridge way, to buy the winner of the jumping contest this afternoon. He'll pay you a hundred dollars over your top offer for her. I've got a blank check here."

"I guess I'll take that," said Bud quietly without any hesitation.

Two minutes served to complete the transaction; and, with the check in his pocket, Bud bade a tender farewell to the little mare. Then he moved in the direction of the door.

"And supposing Mr. Myers wants to get into touch with you, where can he find you?" asked the buyer, halting him.

Bud paused, framed in the doorway. "Oh, tell him France—just France. And you might add that I hung on to the cayuse long enough to get me there."

All Dog

By H. Mortimer Batten

Author of "Rangers of the Air," etc.

A DOG as won't tackle a fox ain't worth a cuss. I wouldn't give five straws for him."

That was Tom Loam's opinion, his gaze fixed the while on the short-tailed, wire-haired, young hopeful which shared his unkempt solitude. Unfortunately several people had several times heard him utter it. "That purp," he would pursue, punctuating his sentences by that hard sucking at a burnt-out pipe which so many woodsmen consider essential when special emphasis is needed, "that purp comes of good stock, noted for its fox-hunting ability. His mother——"

But at this juncture, Tom's visitors usually prepared for sleep, for they knew that he would carry on with intermittent suckings for another hour and a half. Anyway, Tom was a dog man; so he should know.

Meantime Tom's puppy blundered into the same silly mischief and burnt his nose on the same hot stove with monotonous regularity. Daily he buried his master's huge slippers in the snow, which was about the best thing he could have done with them; and daily he was walloped for it. Whatever his father and mother may have been—and judging from Rag's appearances they were nothing out of the ordinary—he was just a shortsighted, good-natured backwoods puppy, entirely lacking in anything suggestive of the gift of profiting by previous and sorrowful experience. Still, the lumbermen at camp No. 7 fully believed, by sheer force of repetition, that Rag was "the goods" so far as hot-stuff copper-bottomed terriers were concerned.

It was the tail end of winter, and things were slack at Camp No. 7. Thus two of the men ran a fox into some boulders while sauntering along the shore of the Etomiami River and, thinking that here was an opportunity for Tom to try his dog, they walled the

fox in. Then one of them went for Tom, while the other mounted guard to make sure that reynard did not escape.

The man was surprised that Tom showed so little enthusiasm, though he agreed to come and bring the purp and his gun. That fox was a corpse, sure as little apples. On the way back they called at the camp, and about twenty-seven of "the boys," more remarkable for stubbly chins and broken noses than for any outward and visible signs of youth, accompanied them to the place where they had the fox. And on the way back they were again treated to Rag's pedigree, while Rag trotted ahead, carrying a stick, and floundering foolishly into every drift.

On arriving there the terrier, with appropriate urgings from his master, was introduced to the hole into which the fox had disappeared and, ever ready to oblige, he wriggled in as soon as he realized that this was what was required of him. "Now see that fox skit," muttered Tom, and the atmosphere of expectancy was great.

But the men saw nothing of the sort. What they did see was Rag emerging tail foremost a good deal faster than he had entered, and uttering the while a panic-stricken "kia-wa-waw!"

As he emerged, it became evident that the fox had bitten him, for his nose was bleeding. It became evident also that he was very much afraid, for with one pitiful look at his master he set off for home at a double, his tail firmly jammed between his legs.

There followed an impressive silence, while every one looked at Tom. Then a roar of laughter went up, but Tom flushed a pale purple to the tattered brim of his sun hat. They were laughing at his dog—which was worse, far worse, than laughing at him. His dog had made a fool of him—his dog, about which he had blown so much, and on which he had pinned his reputation. Rag had failed; Rag had let him down. That was the simple truth, and Tom found it unacceptable. The humiliation of the position was more than he could stand, for he was a dog man. He had taken more pride in that pup than a race-horse owner takes in his most prized thoroughbred.

"Waal," drawled Tom, with terrible coolness, "I guess you boys is playing a trick on me. There's something more'n a fox in that hole—a wolverine, maybe, or a big husky timber wolf."

The men then pointed out the fox tracks in the snow, but Tom would not look at them. It was more than any fox, he swore, that scared his dog like that; but, as he spoke, the fox—for no reason whatever—chose to vacate the hole at their very feet, and bolting across the river, was lost to view.

Tom was silent. Words failed him. He was outraged, humiliated; and it was just as well for Rag that he had gone straight home.

"The purp ain't worth a cuss," one of the men remarked. "He's a throwback, don't take after his father and mother. It's a pity, Tom; I'll give you two dollars for him."

And Tom, not knowing how to retrieve his dignity, remembering all that he had said—Tom, blind with anger and humiliation—blurted out, "You can have him. He's yours. I ain't no use for a purp like that."

He regretted it a moment after, but there was no going back. All the men stood listening, watching; and now the man who had made the bid went over and thrust two dollar bills into Tom's hand. He crumpled the notes, and thrust them into his hip pocket as he turned away, his eyes on the ground. As though in a dream he heard the man who had bought Rag say, "I'm going down to Cross Creeks Tuesday, Tom; I'll come along for the purp Monday afternoon."

Tom was glad to be alone, and went

his homeward way determined to treat Rag to the first real walloping of his life. As soon as he was out of earshot, the man who had bought Rag said to his chums, "You saw that, boys. You heard him agree, and saw the money change hands. You can bear witness that there ain't no going back on it?"

Of course they could. By the law of the land Rag was their camp mate's property; but they felt that he had done a low-down thing by trading on old Tom's sense of pride, and they knew, moreover, that he had bought a good little terrier at about a twentieth of its value. Anyway, that was Tom's show, and Tom had been a hasty fool.

When the latter arrived home, and found that Rag had, in the interval, buried a slipper and reduced the other to rags, he did not—for some reason—flay the pup. Instead he sat gazing absently into space, then he called the dog to him, took its little head between his hands, and gazed into its eyes till the pup tired of the proceeding. Tom loved his dog.

He was a very honest man, but during the next few days he worked out all kinds of schemes by which he could cheat the lumberman and give back the two dollars. Most of them were so obvious that his sense of honesty forbade the carrying of them into effect; but when Monday morning came, Rag cleared up the whole business simply by disappearing. Certainly Tom did not look for him very far; and once or twice, when he found himself whistling, he cut it off short, lest Rag should hear and answer the supposed summons.

Shortly after midday the man turned up, and as they came face to face at the threshold, the lie leaped to Tom's lips.

"The purp"—he muttered—"the purp is dead!"

The other man smiled. "That's all right, Tom," he answered. "Truth is he came nosing round our camp early this morning, so I saved trouble by catching him and boxing him up ready for the trip. Thought I'd just let you know."

Again Tom colored. For the first time in his life he had been caught in a lie, and he turned his face away. "Look here, Bill," he said, rather huskily, "truth is, I want to go back on it. You caught me on the raw the other day, and I was a fool to sell the dorg at any price. I'll give you five dollars back for the two you gave me."

The man grinned, rather an unpleasant grin. "Not much, old son," he answered. "I got a pal way down at Cobalt would give me a hundred and fifty for that dog. He's mine, and I ain't selling for less."

A hundred and fifty! Tom was helpless. He did not possess a hundred and fifty in all the world. He possessed little beyond his cabin, and his cooking utensils, and his claim—and his claim wasn't worth anything, anyway. There never was any gold on it, and never would be. Tom knew this in the innermost recesses of his mind, had known it a year past; yet he was still going on steadily with the assessment work, telling himself with every load of dump he shoveled out, that he was just on the point of striking the pay streak.

And now, even now, as Rag's purchaser turned triumphantly on his heels, the words came to Tom's mind—"There ain't going to be no pay streak." The knowledge came, too, that he was just wearying out his life, among the black flies and the mosquitoes, as thousands of others were wearying out their lives in this infernal north country. Waiting for something to turn up, lured on by the success of just a few, he knew that, in the manly order of things, he was but a derelict on the infinite seas of adventure.

It had not seemed to matter much whether or not the dump contained

any yellow grains when each morning he had had to search for his slippers under the snow; when each midday the task of rubbing fat on the purp's burned nose had been his lot; when each evening, if there was nothing else to be done, time could be well spent repairing the aforesaid slippers. Even the slippers were gone, and Tom shuffled about without them, with the result that one foot became frostbitten, and he went lame. Having so much time on his hands, he neglected the bite, and it became worse—till one of the men from Camp No. 7, happening along one evening, advised him to take care of himself or he might lose a foot. Thereupon Tom advised the man to look after his own feet, and not go nosing about what did not concern him.

"Old Tom's terrible terse," remarked his adviser at Camp No. 7, that night.

"Expect he misses his purp," observed another.

"He's getting to be an old man, anyway," put in a third; while yet a fourth grunted something about one-man loneliness and the soul-freezing north. "A man ain't any right to live alone without a dorg," he added.

"Not when he's once had a dorg," supplemented the second speaker.

So old Tom began to go downhill a little; but, though he missed his dog, he did not quite realize that it was owing to the loss of that frivolous young animal that the fates seemed to be taking a turn against him.

Meantime little Rag had been conveyed on a loose-wheeled buggy over forty miles of unspeakable forest trail which fairly jolted his teeth loose, then over fifty miles of rickety railway to Cross Creeks—a prisoner throughout the trip in a close wooden box. When at length he gained his liberty, he too had changed a little. He seemed no longer a silly pup, but a grown dog. He growled in a most terrible and fear-inspiring manner at his purchaser; he refused to eat or drink; and all he knew was that he wanted old Tom very badly. So, when that evening, a dull winter evening, the man from the lumber camp took Rag for an airing—Rag, as soon as his nose was through the door, set off in a bee line for somewhere, anywhere. At all events, he was not going back to the man from whom he had escaped.

This much was in Rag's mind; he would go back to Tom. How he was to achieve that feat he did not know; but he was quite confident something would turn up. And, as he fled down the main avenue of Cross Creeks, with its pretentious, hollow, shop fronts—each pretending, by dint of waste boarding, to be larger than it was—he heard a sound which suggested a solution, the clank-clank of the bell on a locomotive just about to start. So he headed for the railway dêpot, and arrived just as the train began to move. He was playing in luck; since, for once, the baggage man was friendly.

But, alas, it was bound for a point five hundred miles farther than ever from old Tom's cabin; though, of course, Rag did not know this. On the whole he spent a very happy evening; the brakeman and the baggage man divided his attention.

Bright and early next morning the train stopped at a little bush camp, and hearing another dog barking Rag got out to inquire into the matter. So the train went without him, but it did not matter much. Old Tom could wait. Rag went off with the other dog—quite a decent chap, though he belonged to the Indians, who had many dogs. Next morning the tribe moved on; and Rag, curled up on a folded wigwam in the waist of a birch bark canoe that was propelled by an old squaw, went with them.

He was with them nearly a fortnight, and obtained a great deal of useful information in the savage art of

taking care of himself. Then it occurred to him that it was time to take the train home; but, alas, the train was many miles away. So Rag wandered for days in the bush, living chiefly on frogs, and snakes, and other things which looked bad but tasted a good deal worse. At length, footsore and lean, he fell in with a couple of fire-scourged, fly-bitten rangers, and gave them such a greeting that they felt compelled to take him aboard their canoe. They were making for the railhead; and to the railhead they took Rags, where they hailed the train and all three scrambled aboard a timber truck, dragging their canoe after them.

At the place where the train stopped —after a whole day of jolting and rain—there was no other train to take them on, but the next thing to it, a river steamer with stern paddle wheel. So Rag, having sheltered for the day under one of the ranger's tattered jackets, climbed aboard the steamer, where no one would own him because no one wanted to pay his fare. But he shared the boilerman's supper, and slept in the boiler room from Kootenay landing to Nelson.

Rag traveled a thousand miles by craft of every kind, found himself in Vancouver, thence back to Nelson and Kootenay, never without a man friend, for he was a winning little dog; yet he searched the while for one friend. His nautical career terminated by a raft going to bits when he was crossing the Red River with a gang of Italian laborers. Most of the laborers tried to swim upstream and were drowned, but that was their affair. Rag swam downstream, a matter of two miles or more; then climbed ashore, and, sick of the water—indeed, he was sick of it several times—he took the first train for Medicine Hat, lived a day or two in ranch country, then climbed aboard another train.

Curled up under a box, he thought about old Tom, who, no doubt, was making a mess of things during his absence. Well, he was going home, though it took a long time to get there; and he would be glad to see old Tom again. He did not know that the locomotive ahead was labeled Athabasca.

So, as luck would have it, the train took him back to Cross Creeks, and recognizing the place from the step, Rag dodged the boot of the conductor and got back in. That was the luckiest chance so far; for the train took him another thirty miles nearer home—where he got out of his own accord, because he was hungry, and went and made eyes at the attendant in the refreshment room. Half a chicken and a saucer of cold milk set him right, and as the train had gone he started to walk the remaining distance home; for he knew, in the mysterious way that dogs do know such things, that home and Tom were very near now.

It was now that the first real hardships befell little Rag; for he left the railway lines, and so lost himself. He had come to know most of the wild folk —the skunk, the white-tailed deer, the squirrels, and the chipmunks which were too quick for him. He had learned much while with the Indians; but there was one he did not know—Unkwa, the porcupine.

So, that first night in the woods, with the great yellow moon overhead and just a flicker of aurora lights drawn out in a crescent northwards, Rag wondered at the strange sniffing and grunting in the thicket ahead. Stealing up he saw the beast, which became motionless at the sound of his footfall. He waited and stared; then he stole forward again, just to sniff the inanimate mass. As he did so, the porcupine whisked its tail, and filled his muzzle with barb-pointed spines.

He backed away, snarling and gnashing. The terrier in his veins bade him go right in and obtain his vengeance;

but the wild dog, wakened by the woods, bade him steal away and leave this beast which the wise do not touch. So he stole away; but during the days which followed, he hid, for the most part, under a windfall, going down to the crystal stream every now and then to drink. Most of the quills worked through into his mouth, and he got rid of them; but there was one which worked upward into his nasal passage, so that he could not breathe naturally, and this one caused him agonies.

So to Rag there came the knowledge that unless he bestirred himself he was doomed, for his strength was sinking. More than ever he wanted Tom, that god supreme in a world of gods, for only Tom could save him the burning, gnawing fret of that barbed, agonizing needle. So he pressed on; and to him now came an understanding which he never arrived at when he lived with the Indian dogs—that he was one singled out among the kindred of the woods, because he belonged rightly to man's threshold. How they know, no man can say; they just know. In his enfeebled state even the squirrels and chipmunks churred at him; and once a lank, lean fox followed at his heels, snarling and hissing, till he turned and closed with the animal, and they fought for hours. At sunset—such a sunset—which stained the forest blue then crimson, they lay face to face and panted, till the fox shifted his gaze, then stole off. They were neither of them any the better, though they were both a good deal the worse for the conflict.

So the day came when Rag, dragging one limb after another, panting, resting, dragging on, heard the sound of a heavy footfall coming toward him down a clearing just through the thicket ahead. How long he had been in the woods he did not know. A magnet had been drawing him on. Somewhere in the back of his brain there lurked a little compass, the needle of which was set toward his all-consuming desire. So now he plowed through the thicket, and saw what neither he nor any living soul had ever seen before—old Tom running, yes, running.

That day Tom had wakened to the knowledge that if he did not bestir himself, he would run out of firewood. So he took his ax and hobbled up the clearing. As he came to the crest of a mound, he saw a big bear standing in the center of the trail just ahead.

Tom took no notice of the bear, for often he had seen more bears in one day than he would care to count. As the animal did not move, he said in a gruff monotone: "Well, ol' son, either you or me's got to git; and I guess it ain't me."

But there Tom made a big mistake, for this bear was one in ten thousand. Probably it did not know what he was; but anyway it dropped to its forepaws and uttered two short coughs which meant, "I'm coming!" And Tom realized in that fraction of a second, that if he did not get out of the way, he was likely to have his head knocked clean off his shoulders.

Tom had never been a sprinter, but now, one foot crippled and swathed in immense bandages, hope died when over his shoulder he saw the bear following. The cabin was two hundred yards away over rough ground. He could never make it at his present speed, which was all he could muster. He felt the bear drawing nearer, nearer; and, catching a glimpse of his cabin through the trees, he wakened all at once to the realization that the place was very dear to him, and that home was home. How sweet home would have been at that moment!

He felt the heavy tread of his pursuer at his heels; he felt the bear rear up to strike him; instinctively he ducked—and fell. Something white seemed to flash under his feet; and as his

whiskers buried themselves in the clay, he heard a roar, and a snarl, and a click behind him. He peered round, and saw the bear striking at the small white thing—then get up and shuffle on.

Again he felt the bear at his heels, but before it closed, he heard that snarl again, and felt the monster halt and turn. Something unusual was taking place; he turned and looked.

Then he saw and understood.

Behind the bear was a terrier—his terrier—and every time the monster got into its stride, the dog snapped at its hamstrings, and dodged back before the great beast could turn with a raking slash. A dozen times, if once, this happened, till the monster, tortured beyond endurance, turned at length to hunt the vexatious terrier. Thus as Tom reached his cabin, he saw the bear crashing from thicket to thicket, to pounce on each in turn, then listen after the crash to see if it had flushed its quarry. For the terrier, having seen the man safely home, was making good its escape as best it could; feeble and starved as the dog was, its foe was a formidable one.

Tom went in, and took the rusty Winchester from its rusty hooks above the tiny parchment window. Then he tore away the parchment, and sighted long and carefully. When at length he pulled the trigger and crouched like an image, his eye still to the sights, watching the effect, he saw the bear roll over like a sack of wheat; it did not stir again.

A little while later a white terrier dragged itself to the threshold and looked into its master's face with eyes of love and greeting.

There was no sickly sentiment between them; and what had to be done, Tom did with a pair of pincers—the removal of that wicked quill—while the terrier tried to bite him, and would have bitten him, but that there was a cord about its mouth. Later the angry snarls turned to caresses; and while the dog and Tom shared their supper from the same bowl, Tom said, "Boy, we'll be quit of this. These here woods is getting me down. We'll take the train for Cross Creeks to-morrow, and start new in the Arrowhead country. Ain't never seen the lakes, have you? My, but you're a clever dog to find your way home."

There was not much question now as to Rag's courage.

ARIZONA DESERT BEANS FOR JAPANESE

JAPANESE scientists have recently become interested in the Papago tepary bean as a possible means of food supply for the inhabitants of Korea. Doctor N. Takahashi, an emissary of the Japanese government, spent some time during the summer at the Desert Laboratory in Tucson, Arizona, studying the cultivation of this bean and the possibilities of transplanting it to Korea. This is part of the Japanese government's campaign of experimentation for the development of crops in Korea, and a large appropriation was made for the purpose. The rainfall in Korea is about twenty inches annually, while that of Arizona averages ten inches. It is therefore a simple matter to use the Arizona climate as a basis for what may be expected in the Japanese province.

The Papago tepary bean, a typical desert product, grows quickly and matures early, and may prove to be a valuable asset to the food resources of Korea.

The Round-Up

GEORGE F. WEEKS says we believe in fair play; he is sure that we do—otherwise we could not hold down our jobs. As an example of fair play, here is what was said here one evening, not so long ago, by C. S. Acken, Chinese Camp, California. Then we'll let Brother Weeks, 817 Fourteenth Street, N. W., Washington, D. C., have his say.

First, then, as to what Acken said: His talk began with a discussion about one of Best's prospecting articles. In the course of this talk, he said: "Another thing, Jim Butler's mule did not discover the riches of Tonopah. George Plant knew Jim Butler and Jim Butler's wife. Plant says Jim was a lazy, shiftless man, always loafing around in the shade; an Indian woman gave Butler the first ore, saying: 'Chim, him goot rock. You take um; I show you plenty.'"

Having repeated Acken's remarks, we will now listen to what Weeks has to say in rebuttal:

"BOSS OF THE ROUND-UP: You could not hold down your job as 'Boss,' unless you believed in fair play, so I am asking for a little space in which to refute certain errors in the current—August seventh—issue of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE. Although the thermometer is over a hundred in the shade, and I am suffering from heat more than I ever did in the deserts of California or northern Mexico, the slur on the good fame and name of Jim Butler of Tonopah makes me 'hot in the collar.'

"In 1901, soon after the discovery of the Tonopah mines, I was called to that place from my newspaper office in Alameda, California, by the sudden death of my brother, John R. Weeks. He had been a desert rat for some twenty-three years, and the first one to 'cash in' at the new camp. There I made the acquaintance of Mr. and Mrs. Jim Butler, two of the finest types of the true pioneer whom I ever met in a life now past the three-score-and-ten mark. They told me the story of the discovery of the Mizpah Mine, the first location in the camp, and their story was corroborated by others in the place.

"Butler was running a pack train from Sodaville, the nearest railway point, to Belmont and, one night, camped near the site of Tonopah. In the morning he found his burros had

wandered off and, after some search, discovered them on the mesa above the trail. While catching them he noticed a fracture on a projecting ledge, caused by the shod foot of one of the animals. Examining it, he found rich ore, with the result that the Mizpah Mine was located; and many became wealthy.

"When any one says that Jim Butler was lazy and worthless he makes me pretty furious, for he was a typical specimen of the hard-working, kind-hearted frontiersmen of the olden days. May his ashes rest in peace!

"Now as to the Pegleg Mine: Nearly fifty years ago I was engaged in the newspaper business in San Bernardino County, coupled with herding bees, chasing cattle, et cetera. Very soon I had my attention attracted by this famous legend. I interviewed every one who knew anything about it, wrote of it in the press, and corresponded with various parties who sought to solve the mystery. The location of this discovery is on a line almost directly northwest from Yuma, toward the Superstition Mountains and Warner's Pass in what was known as 'the bad lands.' It was there that Tom Cover, the wealthy Riverside pioneer, lost his life while searching for it in company with a companion named Russell. The records of the first Masonic lodge in Riverside will corroborate this, as a search party was sent out by it some time in the eighties.

"The Virginia Dale district, where your correspondent locates the Pegleg Smith Mine, is to the north of the San Bernardino Range, while the real location is far to the south of that and the San Jacinto Ranges. It is at least one hundred and fifty miles by trail between the two sections—and in my time there was no trail. I knew the McHaney boys and they did, in fact, have a mine in the Virginia Dale region, as did my brother. This is the first time I ever heard that they claimed their discovery was the Pegleg Smith find!

"The files of the Riverside *Press* and of the San Francisco *Chronicle* of forty years or more ago contained much information about the Pegleg Mine and will corroborate what I have said."

Comes now a gun expert, and a professional, at that. He is no other than L. Norfleet Gilliland, Silver City, New Mexico. Gilliland's business is expert gun repairing, so he sure should know something about guns. Some folks, as simply does a thing for the fun of it, may know more than folks as does a thing to make a living out of it, and because they love their work. Yet, generally, the latter class knows more than the former, about the job under discussion.

Well, here be Gilliland, now let's hear what he's got to say.

"Boss and Folks: If you don't mind, I'd like to voice a few more of my opinions. If our automatic fanatics must have their flivver guns, let 'em have them. But let me ask them this: If automatic pistols—which have been in this country for about thirty years—are so good, why are so many double-action and single-action guns, that have been in use for over fifty years, still being made and advertised?

"The automatic fans' answer will probably be something like this: 'Well, people have not all been able to try them out and appreciate their worth.'

"Now, if anything is *really* an improvement over another thing, it will not take long for the public to adopt it.

"I notice that most of our Round-up friends support the .30-30s and .45s. That shows common sense, but there are always a few who like to be right up with the styles. The latter kind usually have special mahogany gun cases, a shelf full of patented cleaning dope; they pay more attention to their guns than to themselves—and buy special-loaded cartridges from unknown

firms, who advertise high-velocity cartridges, guaranteed to keep on traveling until they kill something, et cetera.

"While I am at it, let me mention a little incident which occured a few days ago near here: I was out with two young men in the hills, shooting at targets with a Winchester shooting the .30-06 cartridge. After running out of targets, we decided to see how it would shoot through an old ax head with a .30-30 load of powder and a service bullet. Knowing there was danger from splattering particles of lead, I decided that it was safest to stand directly behind the shooter. This I did.

"He was sitting about thirty feet from the ax, and I was a few feet behind him. As he fired, I felt a stinging sensation on my right side, just above the belt, and feeling down there, felt an object as big as my thumb nail but round and jagged. It was the metal jacket from the bullet, and how it missed my friend, the shooter, I do not know. It penetrated the flesh a half an inch deep and left an unpleasant wound. I hope this will be a warning to you as well as a lesson to me.

"My old .40-82 did not dig a hole in an ax or perform marvels of maneuvering but it proved its practical worth, last fall, on a deer. The deer went to sleep after a dose of sure-enough lead with a punch behind it. The same goes for .30-30s and all of the good old-timers. They do not kill at the rear but at the front.

"By the way, don't you all think that a nice hunk of copper, like I just mentioned, would do more damage than one of the little blowguns that is operated by both hands and a screw driver in which the explosion of the primer blows a little ball of hard-cased lead? If so, how many shots do you figure would be necessary to put a man out of business? They make a lot of noise, and that is probably where all their effect is.

"Well, I had better pipe down and let you all talk about something interesting. Before I quit, let me say this, if you want to shoot at any kind of thick metal with condensed cannons, borrow granddad's suit of armor; in the absence of such, get behind a pile of sandbags and shove the muzzle of said cannon through a very small hole, and tell every one in sight to hunt a hiding place.'

RANGER'S HORSE KILLED BY BEAR

THAT all the bears in the West nowadays are not harmless is proved by a recent occurrence in the country near Hood River, Oregon. Dewey Nelson, a forest ranger patrolling on Larch Mountain, on going out for his horse early in the morning, found the animal dead a short distance from his cabin. A big brown bear and two cubs were feeding on the carcass. As the ranger approached, the old bear showed fight and charged, whereupon Nelson turned, ran to the nearest tree, and took refuge in its branches. The bear would have followed only for the intervention of Nelson's Airedale terrier, which made a rear attack and kept harassing bruin in that quarter while it was attempting to get at the man in the tree. After about half an hour, the bear became so discouraged by having to contend with two foes, one in front and the other attacking from the rear, that it gave up the battle and followed the cubs into the brush. Only for the timely coming of the dog, it is possible that the ranger would have shared the fate of his horse.

Miss Helen Rivers, who conducts this department, will see to it that you will be able to make friends with other readers, though thousands of miles may separate you. It must be understood that Miss Rivers will undertake to exchange letters only between men and men, boys and boys, women and women, girls and girls. Letters will be forwarded direct when correspondents so wish; otherwise they will be answered here. Be sure to inclose forwarding postage when sending letters through The Hollow Tree.

WE sure are glad to see such a big crowd around our camp fire to-day. No matter how many of you there are, we can always make room for another; so don't be shy, folks, step right into our circle, and hear what "Pack-horse Pard" has to say about the West.

To Those Who Stop at The Tree: There are two things about Western Story Magazine that prompt me to contribute this letter. The first is the atmosphere with which its pages are saturated. And I believe that my nearly twenty years of experience in the West in some measure qualify me to pass an intelligent opinion. There are many well-done stories by people who have really tasted Western life.

As I read such stories I find myself again gazing out across the vast plains, and rolling hills, and up the slopes to the mighty Rockies, where the white-mantled peaks pierce the turquoise sky. There comes to me again the fragrance of the pungent sage and wild buffalo grass; again I listen to the chatter of the sassy magpie and the inimitable yelp of the coyote. Again for me the harsh blasts of the blizzard roar down the cañon in their cruel search for the unwary and unprotected traveler. The companionable chuckle of the camp wagon, the squeak of saddle leather, the bawl of a steer, the thundering hoofs of the herd, the music of the wind in the pines—I hear these, and, oh, a thousand other things that have meaning and melody only for those who have ridden the wind-swept ridges and bedded down under the stars.

I am writing these lines at my desk near Seattle, yet Western Story takes me back to the days when I was a ranger in the United States Forest Service—those were the days when the service was new and the ranger always carried either a .30-.30 or a .45—back to my brief experience as stage driver on the famous old Red Hook and Salmon City road. Aye, those were the days, m' hearties!

The other thing that prompts me to write to-day is the yearning of those, especially the young folk, whose messages to The Tree betray their desire to know more of the West. I believe I know how they feel. I was born down in Iowa back in '79, when that was "West." But from the time I was a twelve-year-old lad punching cows on the Nebraska prairie, when I first heard there were mountains, I wanted to go West. I was not able to realize my ambition until the summer of 1907. I'm thankful that I was able to get there that early, however. I shall never forget the thrill that came to me again and again, as I found myself actually following the stock-and-game trails through the cañons and on the mountains of the old Rocky range, amazed at the unbelievably transparent atmosphere, breathing deeply of the air that is like wine.

The desire of the young people stirs my heart, and I want to give them this message.

You will never know what the prairies and the mountains of the West really mean until you actually touch them. Go West, young people. If it is within your power to do it, get among the great ranges for a while. Leave the railroad, the automobile, and all other fixtures of civilization behind you. Get a good horse, put a bed and grubstake in your pack, a rifle and picket rope on your saddle, and go back among the hills and up the slopes to the higher altitudes. Ride the ridges; build your camp fire by the roaring brooks of melted snow; eat your spuds, bacon, and hot cakes mixed with the smoke of the mountain willow; unroll your bed out under the star-spangled sky and —unless something is seriously wrong with you—unless you are just different and can't be moved by such things, your soul will be stirred as it was never stirred before.

Here's my hand, Gangsters, if you'll grant me a place by your camp fire. Yes, I'll answer your letters if there are not too many of them. PACK-HORSE PARD.

Care of The Tree.

Another letter from an ex-ranger, folks.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: I have been wondering if I could not get in touch with some friends who would find time to write a lonely man of forty-one, who has lived for over twenty years in the open, and seen active service as a forest ranger, over five years in Pennsylvania, and a year in Federal service in Washington State.

I have always owned a saddle horse in these twenty years, am very fond of riding. I am also fond of music, have a piano in my shanty on the mountain top, but can't play much. I live on a high elevation with wonderful scenery; but neighbors are scarce, and I don't have many callers. I'd like to exchange letters with some one interested in my sort of living.

Am somewhat of a cook, too, though my pony was not of the same mind. I gave her an apple dumpling I baked; and I did not see her for a week and had a hard time keeping her at home after that.

Can tell something of woods, forest fires, cattle, sheep, round-ups, et cetera.

FRANCIS DRACHBAR.

Shippensburg, Pennsylvania.

Cecile of New Hampshire, in care of The Tree, asks girls from everywhere to write; she'll tell about her State and foreign countries she has visited. Cecile is fond of horses and of music.

Cicely Barrow, 10 Oberon Street, Randwich, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, would like to hear from Indians, those who live on ranches, and those who're interested in photography.

Will some young married women write Mrs. Floyd Quinn, 1014 South Oak Street, Casper, Wyoming?

Mrs. Henry Chilcote, Box 116, Mapleton Depot, Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania, will exchange snapshots and letters with any one who cares to write.

A lonely young Canadian wife, Mrs. M. F. Galos, Postal Station B., Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, will appreciate letters from other girls her age, eighteen.

HOLLOW·TREE·GANG W·S·M

Ordered that badge yet?
There's no time like to-day.
Twenty-five cents in stamps or coin sent to The Hollow Tree, Western Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, will bring you either a button for your coat lapel, or a pin. In ordering be sure to state which you wish.

"I work as a mannequin in a drapery store, but hate it, and am just longing to hear from some girls my age, twenty-two, who love the open air—especially from ones in California," writes Elizabeth V. Brown, 28 Couthurst Road, Blackheath, London Southeast, 3, England.

"I am looking for a pal who is willing to hike through the Southern States late this fall. I am thirty-one and prefer a woman of the same age who would be willing to work a few weeks en route if required for expenses, some one who isn't a slacker or tenderfoot," says Luella Peters, 213½ Park Avenue East, Mansfield, Ohio.

A shut-in, Mrs. A. F. Stenersen, 4107 North Mason Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, will be greatly cheered by letters; she is twenty-three.

Here are two sisters who want homes in the West: Mrs. R. M. S. and Mrs. Would-be-rancher, both in care of The Tree. Mrs. R. M. S., who lives in Missouri, has a son thirteen; Mrs. Would-be-rancher hails from Ohio and has a sixteen-year-old daughter.

"I notice letters written by people with lung trouble asking about the West as a cure. I've been on the trail for five years, have lived in the Ozarks and in New Mexico, and will be glad to answer as many letters as I can; I hope to be of some use." This message is from Jerry Marlow, Hospital, Leeds, Missouri.

Here are some brothers in the service who'd like some letters: Bone Gasson, in care of The Tree; Michael I. Sistrunk, Company C., 11th Engineers, Corozal, Canal Zone; and Privates W. L. Leedom, and J. J. Flaherty, both of Company H, 35th Infantry, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii.

Frank Bergmann, Post Office Box 2025, Paterson, New Jersey, hopes to receive enough mail from other boys from sixteen to twenty years of age "to fill a truck."

"I am only seventeen and find it hard to make a living," writes Dick of Indiana. "It seems a boy without parents is never wanted for even labor in this State. Will you ask some one out West if they will give me a chance?" I'll forward letters to Dick.

Amel Albrecht, 1309 Cleveland Avenue, East Saint Louis, Illinois, wants correspondents from country sections in the Southwest who will suggest a good place for a young man to locate; he is nineteen years old.

"I live in the beautiful Puget Sound country eighteen miles from Seattle. We have a big chicken ranch, and I keep busy but not too busy to answer letters. I'm twenty-four and interested in outdoor sports." Neil Bostrom, Route 1, Box 15, Pearson, Washington, speaking, boys.

S. H. Johnson, 320 North 4th Street, Hannibal, Missouri, complains of loneliness and believes the cure for this trouble is a full mail box.

Victor Schubert, 2424 Ogden Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, of the local Hollow Tree Club in that city invites folks there over eighteen years of age to join.

Won't some of you sixteen-year-old Gangsters drop a letter to a shut-in your age, Edward Ayres, Ashland, Louisiana; he'd like to hear from everywhere.

TO REDUCE ANTELOPE ISLAND BUFFALO

ANTELOPE ISLAND, in the Great Salt Lake, has become overpopulated with buffalo, and it is quite a problem to dispose of the surplus. A. H. Leonard, of Fort Pierre, South Dakota, president of the company owning the herd, announced a little while ago that unless at least one hundred and fifty of the buffalo are purchased by the people of Utah, he will be obliged to reduce the herd by staging a big buffalo hunt some time during the fall.

According to the last count, there are about three hundred and fifty head of buffalo on the island. Of this number twenty-five must be left for breeding purposes. One hundred and sixty-two have already been sold for delivery alive, but none of the buffalo have been purchased by residents of Utah, although the people of that State have criticized Leonard for his suggestion to destroy the animals by means of a hunting party. The herd, according to Leonard's contract with the owners of the island, must be removed by January 1st.

Where To Go and How To Get There

By John North

It is our aim in this department to be of genuine practical help and service to those who wish to make use of it. Don't hesitate to write to us and give us the opportunity of assisting you to the best of our ability.

Address all communications to John North, care of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

RIVERS OF THE WEST—THE SCENIC COLUMBIA

IMPORTANT as the Columbia River is from a commercial standpoint, with its fisheries, its canneries, its harbors and shipbuilding yards, one of its main interests centers around the natural beauties that the hand of man has had no part in producing. A journey upon its surface is a joy from beginning to end. One passes through some of the wildest regions to be found anywhere on this continent, as well as through some of the most fertile and cultivated. Last, but not by any means least, the grandeur of its entrance into the Pacific Ocean gives a thrill of wonderment and delight to those who are so fortunate as to be able to make this trip.

In quite a number of places the natural appearances are the same as when Captain Gray, Lewis and Clarke, and the Northwest and Hudson's Bay and the Pacific Fur Companies' men first saw its banks. Some of the tall timber that stood in those days has been put into homes, ships, warehouses, piers and other things useful and necessary to mankind; but now either a younger growth has made new forests on the sites of the old, or the land has been utilized by the agriculturist.

Cities appear at intervals, both on the Washington side and in Oregon. Besides Astoria, the first settlement on the Columbia, we see Portland, the largest city in Oregon, and The Dalles, for many years the head of navigation. On the Washington shore are Vancouver, Stevenson, White Salmon and other cities busy with the hum of commercial life; while small villages, isolated farms, and rich orchards surrounding attractive dwellings slope toward the river. These evidences of man's encroachments are found all the way to Vancouver, the oldest city in the State of Washington. Here the traveler should stop over long enough to get a good view of the region which inspired the beginning of the first city in Washing-

ton. A bridge that cost nearly two million dollars spans the river, connecting the States of Washington and Oregon and furnishing direct communication between Vancouver and Portland.

Cultivated lands are seen on both sides of the river going north until the mountainous region is reached and the roar of the cascades is heard. Here are wonderful examples of nature's skill, among them Castle Rock, nine hundred feet high, so called because from a distance it has the appearance of a castle. For many years this rock was considered insurmountable; but a trail has been constructed around it, so that visitors may climb to its peak and look down at the Columbia eight hundred feet below. Then there is St. Peter's Dome, one of the wonders of the American Continent. This wonderful monolith, two thousand feet high, is the great guardian of the Columbia River, with Cathedral Rock and a goodly company of other rocky heights, keeping watch over the rushing waters until the end of time.

Oneonta Gorge, a precipitous cañon, almost concealed behind towering rocks, leads to a fall ninety feet high; but the most beautiful of all the sights along the Columbia is, in the opinion of a large majority of those who come this way, the Multnomah Falls, the "queen of all American cataracts." Its source is the famous Larch Mountain, and its waters drop in a series of falls down into the Columbia River. The upper fall is about seven hundred feet in height. The waters fall, almost silently, into a great circular basin, which in turn surrenders the flood to another fall of seventy feet, when they cascade under a short bridge and on to unite with the waters of the great river.

The Columbia is recognized as the greatest fishing stream in the world, its catch of royal chinook salmon having been valued at over a hundred million dollars since the beginning of commercial fishing in its waters in the early sixties.

Near Stevenson and Carson, Washington, are several hot springs, noted for their health-giving qualities, where good accommodations are available for the large numbers of visitors who come here for health or recreation.

Going still farther northward, wilder scenes are met with; the gorges are deeper; the dashing waterfalls are higher and more thunderous as they leap over the rocky heights; native trees are more plentiful and more luxuriant; and the course of the river is more winding. For many years this great waterway of the West was an elusive prize eagerly sought for by ardent and intrepid searchers of the unknown; and a little time spent in re-exploring its majestic beauties and studying its possibilities for agricultural and commercial undertakings, would well repay the tourist, if only in the enjoyment of the marvelous scenery of this magnificent river of the West.

AN OLD STORY

Dear Mr. North: I read in a recent issue A. McComber's letter about the big Chicago meat-packing firms sending riders to South America. This is a very old yarn by now. How it ever got around is more than I or any one I ever met could tell. I first heard it in 1900, in Calgary, Alberta; I was riding for P. Burns Packing Company at the time, and the tale was quite common for a while. Two fellows actually pulled out and went to Great Falls, Montana. This was supposed to be the starting place. They returned sadder, poorer, and wiser. Sometimes it was the Argentine, sometimes Patagonia; and I heard a yarn once that they were shipping a big lot of stockers to Queensland, Australia. The tale fell flat for a number of years, and then showed up again in 1910. Same old tale—forty dollars a month and a three-year contract, free transportation both ways, and find your own riding gear. I've been West every year since returning from France in 1919, but have not heard the tale. It still seems to be alive apparently. Let's hope that your article kills it somewhat.

I notice from time to time some pretty sound advice in your weekly spiel, on going West

to be cowboys, et cetera. Do you ever get letters from disappointed ones out there? I have met dozens out in Alberta and Montana and heard some pretty hard-luck stories, too. There used to be—and are yet—a few small ranchers who would get these green fellows out to their layouts and just let them ride enough to keep 'em interested. In between, they got a lot of fencing done, posts cut, corrals fixed, and haying, and often traded an old saddle or a cow pony for wages. I knew one fellow who could not ride on a box car out on a ranch near Calgary. He dug so many post holes we christened him "Johnny Post-hole," and so he remains to this day, though he's a brakie on the railroad now. C. W. JACKSON.

Toronto, Ontario.

Most of the lads who write to me would count themselves lucky to be allowed to "ride enough to keep 'em interested" and put in the rest of their time digging post holes, haying, and doing other odd jobs around the ranch. What do they think ranchers are anyhow? Just a lot of easy marks that'll let 'em pose around on horseback all day like a bunch of movie cowboys? A job on a ranch out West these days, and other days, too, is a good tough job. Thanks for the entertaining letter, old-timer!

HE SEES A SAW

I WAS coming out of Spokane one morning, and the conductor was checking up the smoking car. An English author sat down on top of me in the seat; and he says, "Excuse me, are you a native of this country?" I told him I was.

He says, "I'm an English author, writing a book about the United States of America; and, while I have been sitting in this car, I have observed an ax and a saw hanging up there. Is that some enterprising American advertising his goods?"

I said, "I've read some of these books that Englishmen have written about this country, and they're nothing but a pack of lies. That saw and ax are used for another purpose. In this country in case of a wreck, it costs more to maim a person than it does to kill them. Do you understand that?"

He says, "I do not."

"Well, not very long ago we had a wreck on this road," said I, "and there was a man and his wife on the train. The man got killed, and the wife got her thigh broke. The company went to settle with the lady; and they paid her five thousand dollars for killing her husband, and eight thousand dollars for breaking her thigh. Now, you see there is a difference there of three thousand dollars."

He says, "Yes."

"Now," I said, "in case of a wreck when everybody isn't killed outright, we have got instructions to take that saw and ax and kill them and save the company three thousand dollars a piece."

MISSING

This department conducted in duplicate in DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE and WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, thus giving readers double service, is offered free of charge to our readers. Its purpose is to aid them in getting in touch with persons of whom they have lost track.

While it will be better to use your name in the notice, we will print your request "blind" if you prefer. In sending "blind" notices, you must, of course, give us your right name and address, so that we can forward promptly any letters that may come for you. We reserve the right to reject any notice that seems to us unsuitable. Because "copy" for a magazine must go to the printer long in advance of publication, don't expect to see your notice till a considerable time after you send it.

If it can be avoided, please do not send us a "General Delivery" post-office address, for experience has proved that those persons who are not specific as to address often have mail that we send them returned to us marked "not found." It would be well, also, to notify us of any change in your address.

Now, readers, help those whose friends or relatives are missing, as you would like to be helped if you were in a similar position.

WARNING.—Do not forward money to any one who sends you a letter or telegram, asking for money "to get home," et cetera, until you are absolutely certain that the author of such telegram or letter is the person you are seeking.

ELLER, J. J., or P. H. CARLISLE.—Please let me hear from you. L. K. Hawkes, 540 Dayman Street, Long Beach, California.

WILLIAMSON, DELBERT.—About fifty years of age, six feet tall, gray hair and brown eyes. Last heard of in California. Please write to Julia E. Taylor Poulsen, care of C. Shilling, Flandreau, South Dakota.

MAULEY, SURRY L.—His home was in McKinney, Texas, before the war. Would like to hear from you. Address L. M. S., care of this magazine.

C. L. F.—Your father and I are divorced. I have important news for you. Send your address. Mother, Box 104, Mancos, Texas.

WOOD, SARAH.—Left her two small half brothers with her mother's people in Henry County, Missouri. She would be about seventy years old. One of the half brothers, Henry, would like to hear from his father's people. Communicate with Mrs. W. O. Groene, Box 142, Handley, Texas.

HULL or ELLIOTT, MAMIE.—Lived in Newark, New Jersey, in 1886. Later moved to Baltimore. An old friend who has tried for years to find her would be grateful for any information. J. J. M., care of this magazine.

HOUSTON, EDITH ROSS.—Tall, black hair and eyes, about thirty-eight years old. I have news for you. Please write. Irene, Box 62, Udell, Iowa.

POORE, DOLLIE, or DORIS EVANS.—Age forty-five. Last heard of at Roslyn, Washington, in 1905. Any information will be greatly appreciated. G. W. Walters, P. O. Box 356, Moscow, Idaho.

HUITT, R. K.—Seen at Monument, New Mexico, about seventeen years ago. Any information as to his whereabouts will be gladly received by his brother, C. B. Huitt, Eastland, Texas.

C. W. M.—You did not understand. I want you. Sunshine, P. O. Box 949, N. N.

O'BRIEN, WILLIAM JOSEPH.—Last heard of at Bryant, Washington. Married Julia Wooldridge in 1901. His sister would like to hear from him. Kate, care of this office.

GUERRA, CARLOTTA.—Mexican. Has a little girl twelve years old named Conchita Luna. My mother is white, has brown eyes, and is five feet four inches. Last heard of in 1921 in California. Her son would like to get in touch with her. Daniel Luna, Route B, Box 353, Kingsburg, California.

SCOTT, ROSELLA BABE.—Would like to hear from you. John H. Scott, Station A, Box 182, Lansing, Michigan.

KUCERA, ADOLPH.—Formerly of Seattle and Alpha, Washington. Father is dead. Please write to your sister. Anna S. Kucera, 673 Johnson Street, Portland, Oregon.

ATTENTION.—Would like to hear from any one who served in the A. F. G. with the Fifth Infantry. I was cook in Company A, and later a private in Service Company. John D. May, 799 First E. H. Street N. E., Linton, Indiana.

JOHNSON.—Was a blacksmith in Service Company, Fifth Infantry, at Andernoch, Germany. Last seen at Fort Slocum, New York, in 1921. Please write to your old buddy, John D. May, 779 First E. H. Street N. E., Linton, Indiana.

MACK.—Formerly connected with the Florida East Coast R. R. at Fort Pierce, Florida. Please write to your old friend, Marie, P. O. Box 611, Gainesville, Florida.

POLLARD, R. J.—Painter and paper hanger. Last seen in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1913. Please write to your brother, John Pollard, care of Extra Gang No. 3, Vanada, Montana.

HAMILTON, LEWIS.—Formerly of Trenton, New Jersey, and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Please write to W. House, 1211 W. Hill Street, Louisville, Kentucky.

BROWN, GERTRUDE SPRANGE.—Formerly of St. Joe, Missouri. Last seen in Chicago, Illinois. Please write to Dorothy Kilroy, 815 Buchanan Street, St. Louis, Missouri.

SULLIVAN, EMMETT, and DEWEY COWLING.—Your niece and cousin would like to hear from you. Mrs. Florence E. Brookshire, Box 195, Covington, Oklahoma.

SNIDER, JIM.—Sixty-five years old. Was working on a farm in western Texas in the fall of 1924. His daughter would like to hear from him. Mrs. Leota Titus, Box 366, Cromwell, Oklahoma.

BOARDMAN, E. A.—Left his wife and two children about nineteen years ago. When last heard from he was in Kansas. His daughter is anxious to hear from him. Mrs. Arthur Wright, 306 East Chestnut Street, Springfield, Missouri.

READ, ETHEL M.—Was a nurse in England during the World War. Last heard of at Peoria, Illinois, in March, 1922. Any information will be greatly appreciated. Francis J. Donohue, Q. M. Corps, Chilikoot Barracks, Alaska.

WAGNER, WILLIAM JAMES.—Left home five years ago. Heard from July 30th, three years ago, from Tacoma, Washington. Letters sent there were returned. Please write to your mother, who is worried about you. Mrs. Bessie Wagner, care of Miss Blanche Lang, Lock Box 55, Woodsfield, Ohio.

ESCO or NOSCHESE, LUKE.—Age fifteen, heavy build, dark complexion, brown hair, dimples, and black eyes. I am ill and would like to hear from you soon. Mrs. Filomena Noschese, Box 606, Ellwood City, Pennsylvania.

PUNTIN, FRANK.—Disappeared from home June 13, 1926. Fifteen years old, five feet three inches tall, stockily built, large hands, dark-brown, heavy hair, brown eyes, slightly cast, even teeth, and a merry smile. Any word of this boy will be appreciated by his anxious mother. All forgiven if he will only write. Mrs. Margaret Puntin, 162 West Seventy-eighth Street, New York City, New York.

TRUAX, MALCOLM.—Left home over thirty years ago. Your mother would like to hear from you. Letters sent to Gibson, Oklahoma, were returned. Any one who knows anything about him please write to Mrs. Jane Truax, R. R. 2, Vassar, Michigan.

JENSEN, EINAR.—Last heard from at New Orleans a year ago. Your friends at Sarasota, Florida, would like to know your whereabouts. A. Ketelsen, Box 1242, Sarasota, Florida.

D. P.—Am very worried. Willing to do more than my part to get along. The babies need your love and help. Please come back. We are in Henryetta, Oklahoma. Your wife.

HAMILTON, PAUL J. or PATRICK J.—Last seen in Newark, New Jersey. Age forty-five, married, and has four children. Has also lived in Sidney, New York. Wanted very much. Daisy R. Leacock, care of this magazine.

AVERY, GILBERT.—Age twenty-one. Born in Alma, Nebraska. Left there July 21, 1925, and taken to a home in Omaha, Nebraska. Please write to your sister, Mrs. Grace Tanner, Box 201, Alma, Nebraska.

MIRES, BILL.—Would like to hear from you. Reba, care of this magazine.

CORNELISON, JESSE.—Irish descent, red hair, crippled in one foot. Last heard of in 1920 in Oklahoma. Write to your old friend, M. R. Buchanan, P. O. Box 156, Jacksonville, Texas.

ROY.—Have some very important news for you from your wife and baby. Please send your address. Sis.

WOODWARD, Mrs. RUPERT.—Last heard of at Ft. Worth, Texas. Please send your address to Mrs. W. P., care of this magazine.

YOUNG, ELLA.—Of Phelps County, Missouri. Left me at the Children's Home Society of St. Louis, in 1899, when I was about a year old. Would appreciate any information concerning her. Please write to Bertha Byrd, care of this magazine.

EARTHMAN, FLOYD.—Last heard from in 1923 at Gunter. Please write to us. Ed. Earth, Texas.

REYNOLDS, BERT J.—If you could only know how I care for you in spite of all. Won't you please let me hear from you? M. G. J., care of this magazine.

DORTON, VERN.—About twenty-four years of age, brown eyes and black hair. Formerly of Salt Lake City, Utah. Have not heard from him in two years. Ann Hammett, 1455 Florida Street, Long Beach, California.

A. A. A.—Write at once and give address. Dad.

SMITH, EVA.—Lived at Detroit, Michigan, in 1915 or 1916. Later went to Ashtabula and Cleveland, Ohio. J. Smiley, 4900 S. Wabash Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

REEDER, FLOSSY.—Believed to be living on a ranch. Please write to Joe Altamos, Box 409, Donora, Pennsylvania.

JAMES L.—Everything O. K. Write at once to Louise and me. Can pull together. Quien sabe? Chick.

LOCHEMES, CLARENCE and **NORMAN.**—Last heard of at Los Angeles, California. Have news for you. Please write to Mrs. Helen Hagenau Nelson, 2522 Vine Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

BERT.—A student of S. D. S. Agriculture and Mechanic's College, at Brookings, South Dakota. Please write to your friend, "Billie," of Texas, care of this magazine.

MATHIS, SARAH.—Last heard from in 1918 at Millville, New Jersey. Please write to Edgar C. Lee, 228 S. Bancroft Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

POTTORFF, WRAY RUSSELL, Jr.—Why don't you write home? If you are working, it is all right. Daddy and I are almost frantic. We are in Kansas now, but Cecil will send your mail to us. Mother.

ROBERTSON, JAMES H.—Last heard from three years ago at Olean, New York. Was a pipe fitter for the Pennsylvania Railroad. About five feet six inches tall, dark-brown eyes, sandy hair. Please write to your mother, Mrs. H. D. Mann, 814 Rutger Street, St. Louis, Missouri.

TUCKER, FREDERICK SYLVESTER.—Age thirty-four, tall and fair. Of Bozeman and Butte, Montana. Last heard of five or six years ago at Denver, Colorado. Father has been sick for over four years and would like to have news of him. Please write to Beatrice M. Tucker, Box 106, Dayton, Oregon.

WATSON, Mrs. TOM.—Lived at Clarksville, Texas, in 1919. Please write to P., care of this magazine.

I. S. G.—Please send for me before it is too late. Let us try again under different circumstances. If not, please let me know that you are O. K., for I will always care. B.

McCONNELL, JIM.—My last letters to you were returned. Please send your address. Regardless of what has happened, I am still your friend. J. L. Haley, R. 4, Box 93, Lubbock, Texas.

SHELLEY, ALBERT L.—Last heard from at Burns, Oregon, in 1925. Was in partnership with Fred Thistell, on a forty-acre ranch. Is thirty years old, blond hair, blue eyes, and fair complexion. Any trace of him will be appreciated by his family, and his anxious mother. Mrs. Anna Shelley, Freeland, Washington.

ZORTMAN, Corporal.—Was with Company A, Twenty-ninth Engineers, at Fort Humphrey, Virginia, from 1922 to 1925. Please communicate with your old pal, Private James F. Greer, Battery C, Thirteenth Field Artillery, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii.

FALDOWSKI, EDWARD.—Was honorably discharged from the Marine Corps, May 8, 1914, at Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Later lived at Brooklyn, New York. His mother, sister, and brother in Poland would like to locate him. Address his cousin, A. Faldowski, care of Mascarel Hotel, 807 Summit Avenue, Los Angeles, California.

JOE E. C.—Left his wife and two babies. Young, medium height, weighs one hundred and thirty-five pounds, dark hair, gray eyes, heavy eyebrows, scar across nose, left-handed. Any information will be gratefully received by his wife, Mrs. J. E. C.

GARDNER, M. L.—Last heard of at Steilacoom, Washington. Any one knowing his address please notify Dick Gilliam, 43 Blake Street, Greenville, South Carolina.

WOLF, WOOLWINE.—Formerly of Virginia. Attended Marshall College at Huntington, West Virginia, in 1921-1922. Any one knowing his whereabouts please communicate with his old pal, who wishes very much to hear from him. Thomas R. Sawyer, U. S. S. "Camden," New York City, New York.

PINNEY, PEARL B.—Sixty-three years old if he is living. Over six feet tall, birthmark on neck, little fingers on each hand crooked. Last heard of in 1885 from Dickinson, North Dakota. Please write to E. M. H., care of this magazine.

BRIGGS, ALFRED.—Left Aurora, Illinois, in the fall of 1923, for Sacramento and San Jose, California. Would like to hear from you. Harry O. West, U. S. S. "Procyon," care of postmaster, San Francisco, California.

JOSEPH, CARL LEVANT.—Left Corning, New York, August 8, 1923. A few days later joined the navy at Detroit, Michigan, using the name Bedient. He is twenty-five years old, dark hair and eyes, about six feet tall, and weighs about one hundred and seventy pounds. No reason for leaving home or changing his name. Any information will be greatly appreciated by his father, E. G. Joseph, P. O. Box 245, Corning, New York.

PARSONS, ROLLAND R.—Last heard from at Frankfort, Indiana. Please communicate with Pierce W. Campbell, East Passaic Avenue, Bloomfield, New Jersey.

MAY.—I want to get in touch with my mother, whose first name is May. She left me with relatives about thirty years ago. Thelma, care of this magazine.

BEASLEY, MINNIE C.—Come back to me. I love you and will forgive you. Write to me and I will come to you. A. W. B., 305 Eleventh Avenue E, Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

JEAN.—Please write to me. I don't know what to do about our marriage. Blossom, 1504 Military Street, Port Huron, Michigan.

BURGE, CLARENCE CLYDE, and **RUSSELL LOWELL.**—They will receive valuable information if they will write to their brother, James R. Burge, U. S. Naval Hospital, Mare Island, California.

W. H. W.—There is an important letter for you at this office from O. M. L.

ARKLE, JOHN.—Please communicate with F. W., care of this magazine.

GORTNER, WARDER JOHN.—Served with me in Siberia, Philippines, and Honolulu. His home was at Victor, Iowa. Have not seen him since May, 1922. Please write to your old friend, Chick, care of this magazine.

McCUEN, EDDIE.—Of the Third Signal Corps, Camp Lewis, Washington, during 1922 and 1923. Please write to your friend, Edith of Olympia, Washington.

STUMP, HOWARD.—About twenty years old now. Was taken away from his mother when five years of age. Last heard of at Kansas City. Any one knowing him please write to E. E. Brown, 505½ Holly Street, Bellingham, Washington.

QUATTLEBAUM, J. L.—Of Louisiana. Last heard from in 1924. Please write to your nephew, Robert L. Quattlebaum, Holly Bluff, Mississippi.

WIGGINTON, Mrs. M. A.—Lived in Pocatello, Idaho, in 1918. Please write to your brother, Gene Lawson, Battle Mountain, Nebraska.

DE GROAT, JAY.—Please come home. Your father has heart trouble and wants to see you. Your sister, Mrs. Lucy Smalley, Route 3, Blanchard, Michigan.

J. E. J.—Will you write to me at once? R. B. J., Box 26, Watkins, New York.

WILLIS, MONROE.—Last heard from at Bridgeport, Tennessee. His son, who was adopted when a baby, would like to hear from him. Address Merritte, care of this magazine.

KEARNS, or **CAIRNS, PHILIP** and **LIZZIE.**—Last heard of at Alder Springs, California, several years ago. Please write to your brother, Bill Cairns, care of Mrs. J. F. Nedwed, Route 3, Westmoreland, Kansas.

DURMAN, LACEY.—Please write to an old pal. W. T. Bain, Box 234, Sebring, Florida.

HEATON, HUBERT.—We separated in Pulaski, Virginia, in 1924. Please write to me, as I want to join you or Mr. Devers Sullivan at the same time and place. A. P. Cales, Box 234, Sebring, Florida.

DOLPH or **SULLIVAN, ARTHUR E.**—Sandy, curly hair. Nearly six feet tall. Works as brakeman or switchman. His wife would like to hear from him. Mrs. M. Dolph, 1632 Lincoln Avenue, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

BASHELIER.—Would like to hear from any one by this name, or their descendants. Mrs. F. S. Caldwell, Box 564, Idabel, Oklahoma.

MULLER or **MULDER, ISAAC.**—Stopped at Parsons, Kansas, on way to California, in 1894 or 1895. Address Mrs. F. S. Caldwell, Box 564, Idabel, Oklahoma.

CHASE, LOUIS T.—Please write to Dot, care of this magazine.

MEYER, OSCAR J.—I have changed my address. Please write to me in care of this magazine. Dot.

LEONA.—Colored. Last name unknown. Left her baby daughter, Minnie, with Mrs. Carrie Wright Helmes, at Syracuse, New York, about 1897. Later she went to Utica, and Minnie was taken to Newark, New Jersey, with her foster parents, and all trace of her mother was lost. Any information would be gratefully received. Address Minnie Holmes, 73 Lawrence Street, Brooklyn, New York.

FLOYD.—Your mother is very ill and needs you. Please write something definite. I am still waiting for you and hoping you will succeed. Dollie.

LONGHURST, WILLIAM.—Left home near St. Jacques, Michigan, September 18, 1904. Fifty-three years of age, tall, blue eyes. His daughter would like to find him. Mrs. Minnie Nelson, R. F. D. Box 7, Gladstone, Michigan.

BUTKOVICH, JOHN M.—Please come back to your wife and baby. I forgive you for all. Mrs. Mary Butkovich, 1712 Mass Street, Gary, Indiana.

SCOTT, RUTH MILLER, and JOHN HOWARD.—Their three children would like to find some trace of their parents. I was born February 15, 1879, at Fayetteville, Arkansas. Flora Scott O'Neal, 310C N. Polk Street, Amarillo, Texas.

GEORGE.—Mother passed away May 23, 1926. I still care for you: Trust me and write. Marie, care of this magazine.

DATER, GLENN EDWARD and HAROLD.—Were adopted from the Children's Home at Topeka, Kansas. Glenn has gray eyes and brown hair, Harold is a blond. Father a patient at the World War Veterans' Hospital. Sight of his children will aid his recovery. Address J. C. Dater, 821 Picher Avenue, Joplin, Missouri.

YOST, IRA.—Last heard from in Michigan, about 1883. Sisters Beckie, Maria, and Ella still looking for news of him. Address any communication to Mrs. Mabel H. Knight, 13416 Woodworth Road, East Cleveland, Ohio.

SIMMONS, JIM.—Small stature, blue eyes, light hair. Last seen in Tampa, Florida, in 1909. Father, dear, I still love you and want to hear from you so much. Address Mrs. Schlovlet Butler, 2397 Lawrence Avenue, Toledo, Ohio.

HUSTON, JOHN.—Last heard of at Pueblo or Trinidad, Colorado, working for the railroad. Over six feet tall, weighs over two hundred pounds. Lost track of through a misunderstanding. Any information will be thankfully received. E., care of this magazine.

BORDEAUX, PHILIP H.—Nearly six feet tall, sandy hair, scar on left cheek, fifty-four years old. Was ill when he left home, June 4, 1926. Any information will be appreciated by his wife, Mrs. P. H. Bordeaux, R. F. D., South Spencer, Massachusetts.

GORMLEY, PETER.—Last heard of in California. Please communicate with L. H., Box 6959 G. P. O., Miami, Florida.

FAIRCHILD, CHARLES F.—Very anxious to locate any relatives of his, as I have important information for them. Address C. G. Miller, Box 3, Kingman, Kansas.

GIBSON, Mrs. MARY JOSEPHINE, FRED, and ADDIE.—Once lived in Faulkner County, Arkansas. Last heard from at Pottsville, Arkansas. Information as to whereabouts appreciated. Guy Phillips, Box 193, Fletcher, Oklahoma.

M. R.—Of London, England. Please write. "Oklahoma Boy," Fletcher, Oklahoma.

BEEZLEY, ELMER or BERT.—Last heard of eleven years ago. His father will appreciate any news. Tom Beezley, Colorado, Texas.

T. Y. O. H.—If you still care for Sonny and me, write at once. Restaurant sold; everything all right. Will explain everything in letter to you. "The Kid."

SPINNER, KATHERINE.—Last heard from three years ago. Mother forgives you and wants you to come home or write. You have a baby sister who is six months old. Write to your sister, Mrs. Bertha Walters, 753 Wall Street, Akron, Ohio.

HOWARD, JOHN.—Worked and went to school with me in 1924 at Reedsport, Oregon. Write to an old friend. Private Hubert Hatfield, Battery A, Fifteenth Coast Artillery, Fort Kamehameha, Hawaii.

VON WALLBURG, VILLA.—Last heard of eight years ago at Victoria, Michigan. Can now return your kindness. Please communicate with Dolores Geff, care of this magazine.

BODEY, EARL.—Last seen in Rhinelander, Wisconsin. Please write to your sister. Important news. Dolores Geff, 313 Laurel Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota.

RITA.—Of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Small, auburn hair. The boy you met in Central Park last summer, who promised to come back the following Sunday and failed to do so, would like to hear from you. Please write to Dick, in care of this magazine.

TRACIE, RAY.—Colored. Left Louann, Arkansas, in 1924. Is fifteen years old. Please write to your sister, Rosie Rogers, Norphlet, Arkansas.

CHILDS, FLORENCE.—Worked in Minneapolis in 1918, and lived with her sister on Willow Avenue N. Would like to hear from you again. Glenn H. Smith, Onida, South Dakota.

NYE, ALICE.—When last heard of was living about seven miles from Dayton, Ohio. Anybody knowing where she lives please write to her old friend, Earl Signor, Y. M. C. A., Canton, Ohio.

HUGHES, VERA JACKSON.—Last heard of two years ago in Utah. Please write to your niece, Mrs. Alta Bishop Bennett, R. R. 9, Columbus, Indiana.

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Vol. LXIV Contents for October 2, 1926 No. 1

ONE NOVEL

The Border Bandit's Indian Brother . *Max Brand* 1

TWO SERIALS

The Temple of the Sun . . . *Arthur Preston Hankins* . 52
A Six-part Story—Part Three

Trouble Trail . . . . . *George Owen Baxter* . . 77
A Six-part Story—Part Six

SIX SHORT STORIES

Jewels of the Valley . . . *Frank Richardson Pierce* . 46
Ten Miles to Sunset . . . . *Frank Triem* 66
Death Valley's Ghost . . . *Austin Hall* 96
The Bandy-legged Little Hombre . *Howard E. Morgan* . . 105
Bud . . . . . *E. L. Chicanot* 118
All Dog . . . . . *H. Mortimer Batten* . . 126

TWO ARTICLES

Your Dog . . . . . *David Post*. 104
(The Papillon)

Pioneer Towns of the West . . *A. V. Strope* 113
(Globe, Arizona)

MISCELLANEOUS

Western State Flowers (The Sego Lily, Utah) 45
Long's Peak Claims Sixth Victim . . . 51
Seeks Pioneer Father's Grave 65
Wyoming's "Great Wall" 76
Adjusting Yosemite Boundaries 95
Colorado Range War Averted 103
Replanting Western Forests 112
Fox Farming in British Columbia . . . 117
Arizona Desert Beans for Japanese . . . 132
Ranger's Horse Killed by Bear 135
To Reduce Antelope Island Buffalo . . . 138
He Sees a Saw 141

DEPARTMENTS

The Round-up . . . . . *The Editor* 133
The Hollow Tree . . . . . *Helen Rivers* 136
Where to Go and How to Get There . *John North* 139
Missing 142

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and Held Them Spellbound

As I review that tense dramatic moment when I electrified that meeting, it all seems strange and weird to me. How had I changed so miraculously in three months from a shy, diffident "yes" man to a dynamic, vigorous he-man? How had I ever dared give my opinion? Three months before nobody ever knew I held opinions!

ALL my life I had been cursed with a shy, timid, self-conscious nature. With only a grammar school education I could never express ideas in a coherent, self-confident way. But one day my eye fell upon a newspaper article which told about a wonderful free book entitled "How to Work Wonders with Words,"—a book that was causing widespread comment from coast to coast—a book that was being read not only by millionaires, but by thousands of others. It discussed men like me and explained how we could overcome our handicaps.

At first I was skeptical. I thought these defects were a part of my natural makeup—that I would never be able to overcome them. But some subtle instinct kept prodding me to send for that free book. I lost no time in sending for it, as I was positively amazed at being able to get cost free a book that made absolutely plain the secrets that most successful men have used to win popularity, distinction, money and success.

As the weeks wore on and I absorbed the principles of this remarkable method, I became conscious of new physical and mental energy, a new feeling of aggressiveness, and a resurrected personal power that I never dreamed I possessed. Then came that day in the general meeting when the president called on the assembled department heads and assistants for suggestions on the proposed new policy.

Three months previously, the forces of indecision, timidity, and inability to talk in public would have held me to my seat. But suddenly that new power took possession of me and drove me to my feet. That wonderful 15-minute daily training at home had taught me to forget myself and think only of my subject. Almost automatically the ideas which had heretofore lain dormant in a mental jumble, now issued with a vigor, clearness and enthusiasm that astounded me no less than my boss and associates. And I noticed with silent exultation the rapt, intent look on my audience as my story unfolded itself smoothly and eloquently.

To-day the men whom I used to greet deferentially I now meet with an air of cool equality. I am asked to conferences, luncheons, banquets, etc., as a popular after-dinner speaker. And my talents are not confined to business matters but have made me an interesting conversationalist at social affairs. I am meeting worth-while people, I own a good job, a good home, a good car. I am the happiest man that ever lived.

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This has been a year of looking backward. The nation has been celebrating its one hundred and fiftieth birthday, and all of us have been interested in reading of the men and events that made this celebration possible.

Now one hundred and fifty years in most nations of the world is not considered a very great stretch of time. But in fast-stepping America, the men and women of 1926 are about as different from their forefathers of one hundred and fifty years ago as one could well imagine.

When the Declaration of Independence was signed, there were only some four million of us scattered along the Atlantic sea coast from Maine to Georgia. Most of us were farmers then. The largest city was Philadelphia with some twenty thousand inhabitants. Modern manufacture had not begun. Labor was done by hand. Benjamin Franklin had just devised his famous stove. All heating was done by open fires. The clothes of our forefathers were made at home. Life was a stern business. It is interesting to think when you stop at a news stand to-day and look over the mass of printed matter there, that one hundred and fifty years ago there were no such things as national magazines or newspapers. Word of the world outside came by messenger or on single-sheet broadsides issued once a week only in the larger cities.

The people of those days had little time for reading. The older folks had their hands full keeping homes together. The younger, more adventurous spirits were drifting over the Alleghanies to settle what was then the "Far West" in Kentucky and Tennessee.

To-day with the last American frontier conquered, we may still know something of the romance and adventure that was part of the daily lives of our colonial ancestors. Modern methods of distribution of good reading from coast to coast make it possible for the miner in a Colorado camp and the banker in a Park Avenue, New York, home to escape from the monotonies of life through the all-powerful medium of stirring fiction. Makers of fiction supply the outlet that every lover of romance must have.

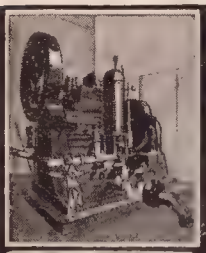
No one publishing concern in this country has done more to supply the demand for good fiction than has Chelsea House, one of the oldest and best established. This firm has made it possible for you to have the latest and best of the works of modern fiction writers at a most moderate price. Here are thumb-nail sketches of two of the latest of the Chelsea House offerings that deserve a place of honor on your bookshelves.

BLUE JEAN BILLY, by Charles W. Tyler. Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Price 75 cents.

Some time ago I reviewed on these pages a rip-snorting detective story called "Quality Bill's Girl." Now, Mr. Tyler has come along with another story about that same fascinating character, and has woven a yarn that has kept me just as interested as did his first book, which is going some. "Blue Jean Billy" is a wild, free spirit who just can't keep pace with modern conventionalized society. You may not approve of all that she does, but it is my bet that you will follow her raiding parties conducted from the rugged little island off the Massachusetts coast with breathless attention. You will, if you are what I believe you to be, a keen judge of good fiction, told at a rapid pace.

RIM O' THE RANGE, a Western Story, by Ethel Smith Dorrance and James French Dorrance. Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Price 75 cents.

Along the Mexican border the moon has a way of coming up over the horizon like a huge yellow cheese. When it shone down on that part of the landscape in and about the Arizomex Ranch it saw some strange doings. They are all set down in this unusually stirring story of intrigue, love, and adventure, with its setting in the colorful Mexican border country. By the way, men, there's a real girl in this book, one that you will fall in love with at first sight. Get "Rim o' the Range" from your dealer to-night and see if you don't.



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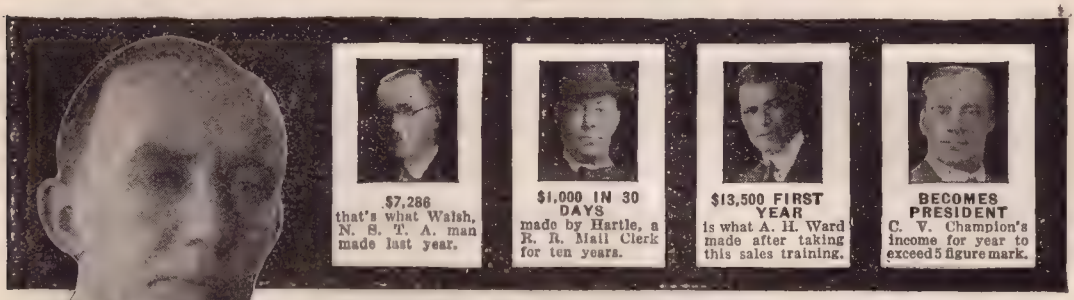

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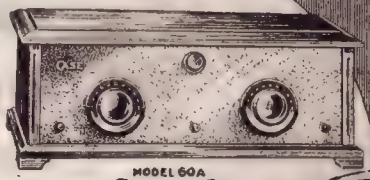

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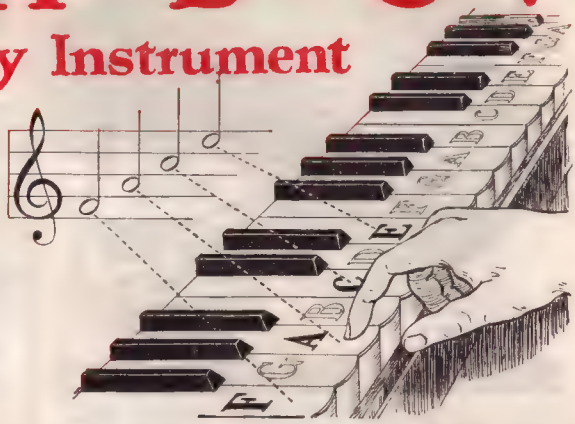

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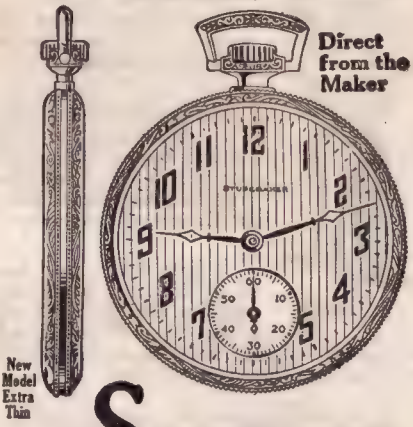

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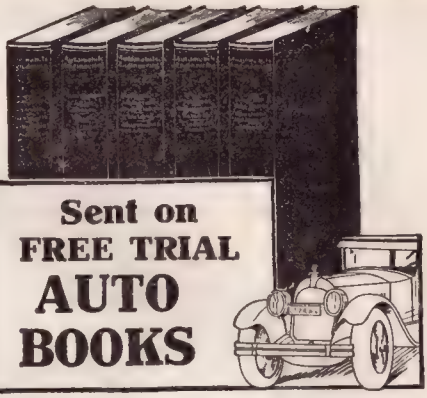

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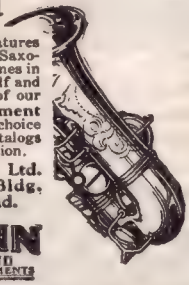

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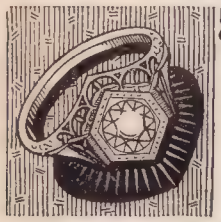

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Nodelay—nopapers to sign—no references! Just ask for No. 17—our choicest blue-white Prizma Diamond in the princely Wales setting guaranteed for 25 yrs. Rich, true-blue sapphires on sides. All the flame and flash of genuine diamonds. Pay only $2.45 when delivered and 50c a week ($10.45 in all). Satisfaction guaranteed. Tie string around finger for size.

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Free Trial Treatment

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To get the names of Gem-lovers everywhere, and tell you about a **Marvelous NEW GEM** matching the finest **genuine Diamond** SIDE-BY-SIDE—same perfect cut, dazzling steel-blue brilliancy and flashing **rainbow fire, GUARANTEED FOR LIFE**, yet low in price, we'll give **FREE** this **flashing, fiery red Mexican Ruby.** For **Free** Gem and catalog, **send quick** your name, address and 10c to partly pay handling cost. **Mexican Gem Importing Co., Dept. AF5 Mesilla Park, N. Mex.**

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Spare-time study with the I. C. S. is winning promotions for thousands of men and bringing happiness to thousands of homes all over the world. In offices, shops, stores, mines, mills and on railroads, I. C. S. trained men are stepping up to big jobs, over the heads of older men, past those whose only qualification is long service. There is a job ahead of YOU. Some man is going to be picked for it. The boss can't take chances. He is going to choose a trained man with sound, practical knowledge of the work.

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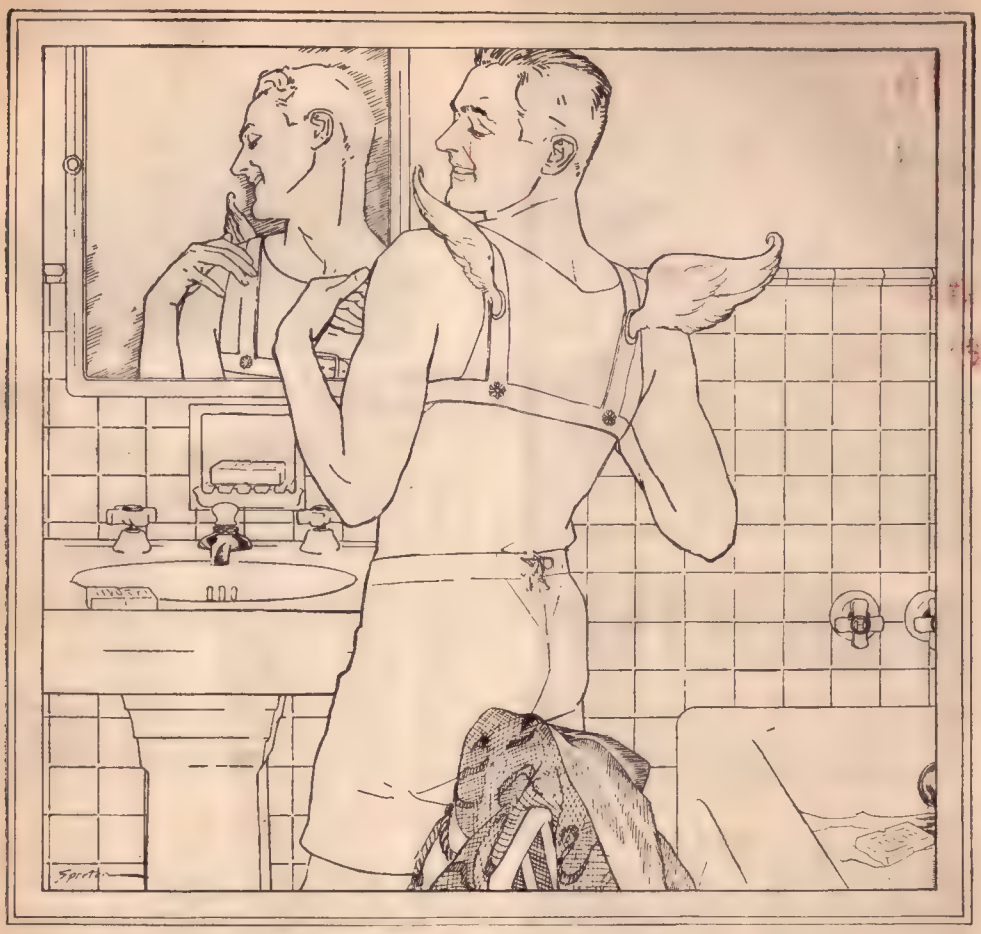

To men who breakfast on nails!

THIS gentleman's before-breakfast temper, resulting from baths with sinker-soap, *used* to give his wife the impression that his favorite breakfast menu would be a rasher of crisp nails and a couple of hard-boiled padlocks on toast.

The temper would develop by stages. No sooner would our optimist exert his first strenuous effort at lather-culture than the shy here-and-there soap would flee his grasp and scuttle to the vast uncharted tub-bottom, defying recapture.

Now notice the change. How beneficent the smile! How charmingly effective the neat little wing arrangement, registering virtue and loving-kindness. Nails and padlocks are no longer on our gentleman's menu — the grace of his company at breakfast is now matched only by the engaging softness of his three-minute eggs.

This magic was achieved by wifely intelligence cooperating with a cake of the rich-lathering, quick-rinsing white soap that floats. Men who have changed to this soap for their morning baths tell us that they never knew before what a jubilant luxury bathing could be. *You can always find Ivory when you want it—at the grocery or in the tub.*

PROCTER & GAMBLE

IVORY SOAP

99$\frac{44}{100}$% PURE · IT FLOATS

OUR *Department of Feminine Economics recommends especially to wives: A cake of dainty new round-edged Guest Ivory for the saving price of 5 cents. Why not be extravagant, and buy 3 cakes at once?*

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Health - - - Ahead!

Half-sick from constipation, stomach and skin disorders—they regained health by one simple food

NOT a "cure-all," not a medicine—Fleischmann's Yeast is simply a remarkable fresh food. The millions of tiny active yeast plants in every cake invigorate the whole system. They aid digestion—clear the skin—banish the poisons of constipation. Where cathartics give only temporary relief, yeast strengthens the intestinal muscles and makes them healthy and active, daily releasing new stores of energy.

Eat two or three cakes regularly every day, one before each meal: on crackers, in fruit juices, water or milk—or just plain, in small pieces. For constipation dissolve one cake in hot water (not scalding) before meals and at bedtime. Dangerous habit-forming cathartics will gradually become unnecessary. All grocers have Fleischmann's Yeast. Buy several cakes at a time—they will keep fresh in a cool dry place for two or three days.

And let us send you a free copy of our latest booklet on Yeast for Health. Health Research Dept. Z-33, The Fleischmann Company, 701 Washington Street, New York.

"I WAS TROUBLED WITH INDIGESTION and dizzy spells. Acid gas formed in my stomach. Many people suggested Fleischmann's Yeast. I tried it and it brought great relief. My dizziness disappeared and I felt better in every way. Now I just take Yeast occasionally to keep my stomach in really good condition."

HATTY LININGER, Miami, Fla.

"I SUFFERED FROM CONSTIPATION for three years. I was an aviator. The food generally was not of the best and usually gulped down in a hurry. My stomach went back on me too. Finally I commenced taking Fleischmann's Yeast. I had no more trouble with my stomach and constipation became a thing of the past."

ALFONSO GOMEZ IZQUIERDO, San Francisco, Calif.

THIS FAMOUS FOOD tones up the entire system—aids digestion—clears the skin—banishes constipation.

Wahl Pens are made in new shades of mottled, red and black. This one sells at $7

A great team is the hand and brain, no matter what your goal.

Train them together, in school and in the game of life, for your victory.

One of the greatest aids to perfect play of the mind is a writing tool perfected for the hand:

A Wahl Pen—beautifully balanced, capacious, and enduring:

Your favorite point, in iridium-tipped solid gold.

Remember, "Your signature is you."

Put it on paper

WAHL PEN

Made by the makers of Eversharp

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A SPECIALLY designed "A" battery for radio service. There is nothing like it in its field.

Proportioned to permit ease of handling and convenience of cabinet assembly and storage, you may expect this new Burgess creation to give you the length of service and dependability under all conditions for which all products of Burgess are noted.

If you are using the ordinary type of No. 6 "A" battery, we suggest that you learn for yourself from the Burgess Radio "A" the measure of service you have a right to expect.

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FAMOUS FEET

..how they're kept free from corns..

FLORENCE O'DENISHAWN'S *Famous Dancing Feet*

"Keeping fit, to a dancer, means, first of all, keeping the feet in trim. Tight ballet shoes and strenuous dancing are apt to irritate the tender cuticle of the toes." So writes the well-known dancer, Florence O'Denishawn.

"Blue-jay is an indispensable friend. It keeps corns and calluses away."

And what a delightful way to end a corn! A cool and velvety cushion fits over the corn and stops the pain at once. Usually one plaster conquers the corn in 48 hours. But, if obstinate, a second Blue-jay plaster vanquishes the most stubborn offender . . . . . At all drug stores.

Blue-jay

THE SAFE AND GENTLE WAY TO END A CORN

© 1926

—and Mennen costs *only* ⅓ cent a shave

All my life I've found that the best usually turns out actually to be the cheapest. I mean that literally —in the dollars and cents meaning of the word.

Take Mennen Shaving Cream. Aside from any other arguments, a Mennen shave costs you only ⅓ of a cent. At the rate of ¾ inch per shave—which is plenty when you use Mennen—you get *five months'* supply of daily, full-size, satisfactory latherings out of the big 50-cent tube. That is, unless "you and yours" use it for shampooing, as thousands do.

The answer is right in *Dermutation*—the Mennen process of absolute beard-softening.

Here is such a remarkable concentration of pure, down-right beard-softening qualities that just a very little bit on your brush gives you the most wonderful, firm lather you ever built.

Use all the water you can—hot or cold, hard or soft—that little sliver of cream will hold plenty. Lathers up into a big mountainous bank which *positively won't dry on your face* and which reduces the stiffest, wiriest whiskers to abject surrender in just about record time.

The other economies just follow naturally. For instance, your razor blades last longer—they only have to work half as hard. You save at least five minutes in time over an ordinary shave. You save your skin, keeping it clean and clear. And the invariable cheerful disposition that accompanies the Mennen shave is an economy priceless beyond words.

Mennen Skin Balm—a rare after-shaving treat—cooling, refreshing, astringent, antiseptic. Absorbed in half a minute. Heals up little cuts and scratches. Tones up the skin. And *Talcum for Men*—25 cents for a big tin. Tinted to match your skin—doesn't show. A little flick over the shaved area absorbs moisture—protects against the weather—gives you a well-groomed appearance.

Jim Henry
(*Mennen Salesman*)

MENNEN SHAVING CREAM

She doesn't fear the dentist

Wise men and women go to the dentist at least twice a year for a thorough mouth inspection. They don't put off the dental appointment until forced to seek relief from pain and the dentist has to hurt. If you see your dentist in time he can keep your teeth and gums healthy.

Neglect punishes FOUR out of FIVE

Failure to take simple precautions lets pyorrhea, dread disease of the gums, become entrenched in the mouths of four out of five at forty, and many younger, according to dental statistics.

Start today to brush teeth and gums night and morning with Forhan's if you would be with the lucky who escape pyorrhea's ravages. Forhan's firms the gums and keeps them pink and healthy. It doesn't give this insidious infection chance to steal upon you.

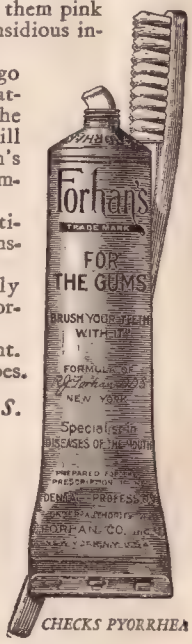
If you have tender bleeding gums go to your dentist immediately for treatment and use Forhan's regularly. The chances are your own dentist will recommend it. It contains Forhan's Pyorrhea Liquid dentists use to combat pyorrhea.

Forhan's is a pleasant tasting dentifrice that gives the teeth perfect cleansing; and forestalls decay.

Include Forhan's in your daily hygiene for your health's sake. Pyorrhea is no respecter of persons.

Four out of five is its grim count. At all druggists', 35c and 60c in tubes.

Formula of R. J. Forhan, D. D. S.
Forhan Company, New York



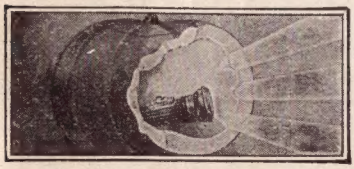
Forhan's FOR THE GUMS

MORE THAN A TOOTH PASTE ::: IT CHECKS PYORRHEA

A THOUSAND THINGS MAY HAPPEN IN THE DARK

Eveready—*portable light in its most convenient form*

PUT an Eveready Flashlight in the jack-o'-lantern this Hallowe'en. It will burn brightly, without danger of fire. Nothing to spill, sputter or smoke. Many novel illuminating effects for parties can be obtained with Eveready Flashlights.



Put an Eveready Flashlight in the jack-o'-lantern

Wherever you need safe, bright, portable light—use an Eveready. In dark closets. Along dark hallways. In the bedrooms. In the garage. When motoring. Eveready is a silent sentinel of safety, ever ready to light the way. The finest flashlight money can buy.

Only Eveready has the new ring-hanger. To get *all* the newest and best flashlight features, insist upon a genuine Eveready. There's a type for every purpose and purse, and an Eveready dealer nearby.

Eveready Flashlight Batteries fit and improve all makes of flashlights. They insure brighter light and longer battery life. Keep an extra set on hand. Especially designed Eveready-Mazda Lamps, the bright eyes of the flashlights, likewise last longer.

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14-K white gold hand engraved case. Fancy wing ends. Silver dial. High grade 15-Jewel movement, $25. $2.50 down and **$1.00** a week.

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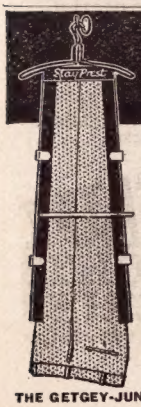

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"Stay-Prest" Trouser Presser sells quick to every man—thousands in use. Men and women are cleaning up big profits with this fast seller. Sells on sight. Priced low. Big cash profit for you. You take orders. We deliver. Your profit in advance. **Wonderful New Invention:** Puts perfect creases in trousers. Takes out wrinkles and baggy knees. Easy to use—takes less than half a minute. Folds into small size. Saves clothes and tailor bills. **Make Big Profits—Others Do.** Jack Ames made $24 in four hours. Randle sold 25 the first day. Mary Roberts made $10 in one evening. Others making big profits in spare or full time. So can you. You risk nothing. **FREE** We start you. Write quick for FREE selling outfit and full details of money-making selling plan.

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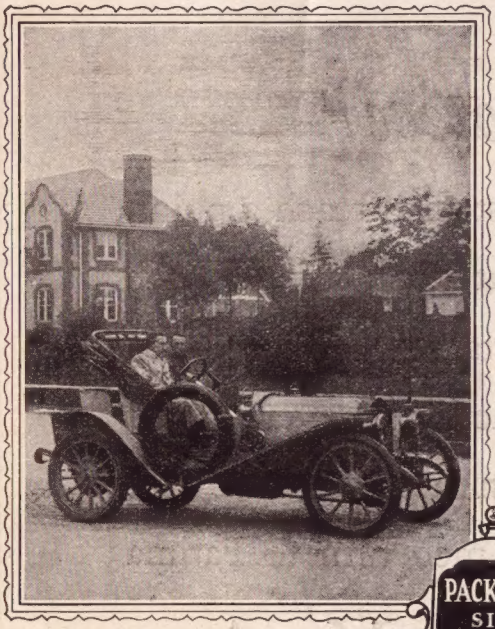
Ever notice?

SOONER OR LATER most men reach a point, in everyday matters at least, where price is no longer all-important. They begin to look around for "something better." And it is by no means an accident that just at this point so many men turn to Fatima

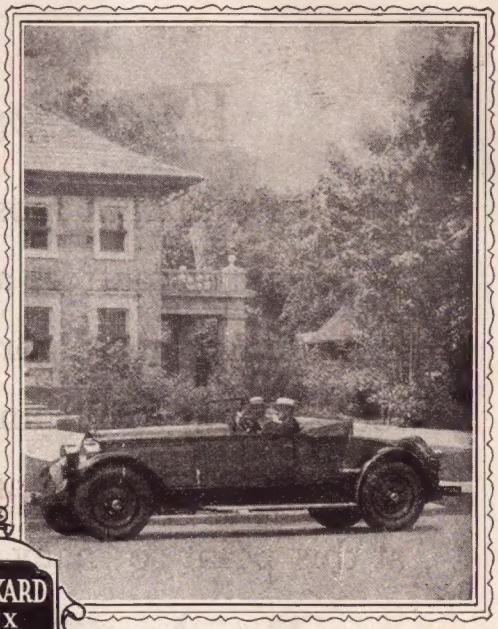
F A T I M A

"What a whale of a difference just a few cents make"

LIGGETT & MYERS TOBACCO CO.



PACKARD IN 1906



PACKARD IN 1926

PACKARD SIX and EIGHT
Ask the man who owns one

Prest-O-Lite served them both

When we look at a picture of a 1906 Packard, it is a little difficult at first for us to realize that this car gave the motorists of twenty years ago the same thrill that the Packard of 1926 gives us today.

Yet it is not difficult when we remember that they are both Packards in every sense of the word.

Twenty years have brought with them many changes—changes in design, changes in construction, changes in equipment, changes in material.

But one thing has not changed since the first Packard rolled out of the factory. This one thing is the unswerving determination of the Packard Motor Car Company to make the Packard car as fine in every detail as is humanly possible.

It is significant that Prest-O-Lite served Packard in 1906 and that it serves Packard in 1926—significant of the fact that Prest-O-Lite has kept fully abreast of the astonishing progress of the motor-car industry.

Prest-O-Lite is extremely proud that it meets the exacting Packard requirements of today just as it met them twenty years ago.

THE PREST-O-LITE CO., Inc.
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